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VARIATIONS ON THE DETECTIVE STORY:

A STUDY OF BORGES, NABOKOV, ROBBE-GRILLET

by

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ABSTRACT

In the nineteenth century, authors like Dickens and Dostoevsky were interested in the detective story for its portrayal of the criminal in an industrialized world. Modern authors like Jorge Luis Borges, Vladimir Nabokov and Alain Robbe-Grillet reckon with the detective genre for reasons which contrast sharply with those of the previous century. After Henry James and Faulkner, Borges and Nabokov were early masters inspired by the closed world of invention and artifice of popular fiction. These authors, along with others like Michel Butor, John Hawkes, Thomas Pynchon, form a tradition in contemporary literature that views the detective story as a self-referential anti-mimetic fabrication.

In our first chapter, "Intertextuality and Artifice," we indicate firstly how Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet expressed their enthusiasm for the stories of Poe, Doyle, Chesterton, Agatha Christie and Simenon in essays and reviews. Secondly, following the self-reflective nature of detective fiction, we point out how our authors make intertextual allusions to detective authors, heroes and conventions of the genre. This chapter, therefore, examines Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet as readers of detective fiction, their major intertextual references, their embracement of a literature of self-conscious artifice and their incisive influence on each other and on modern literature.

We construct a theoretical model in our second chapter "The Detective Story Prototext: An Approach." The concept of variation, on which the methodology of our argument is based, implies that there are two texts always to be considered — the paradigm or prototext and the

narrative that imitates, transforms or varies this first text. Our study consequently comprises two processes: we establish the fundamental properties of the popular genre and then demonstrate how these properties have been transmitted and reshaped. These essential features or the five major components of our prototext pertain to three areas in the narrative: plot structure, narrative perspective, and techniques of retardation and obfuscation. In the development of the prototext, we are assisted by ideas formulated by Formalists and Structuralists, particularly Shklovsky and Todorov. Apart from this chapter devoted to methodology and the detective genre, we precede our subsequent chapters with an overview of innovations in the popular genre and with a discussion of applicable theories like Brémond's bifocal view of an action for plot patterns, Genette's ideas on voice and vision for narrative mode, Barthes' hermeneutic code for omissions.

The third chapter on Borges, "Variations on a Plot Structure," explores first, the complicated reversals in "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" and "La muerte y la brújula," then inspects separately the intellectual decipherments and the duels in "La escritura del Dios," "El fin," and "La espera." Borges' ficciones, organized around enigmas and duels also include, at the level of plot, disruptive elements of the fantastic. These elements like infinite time and the double cause the plot to contain numerous repetitions, duplications and inversions.

Adopting an original narrative perspective can also effect transformations. Despair and Lolita, novels studied in our next chapter entitled "Murderers as Narrators," transfer the emphasis from the investigation or sjužet to the story of the crime or fabula. These novels are told from the self-conscious retrospective viewpoint of murderers.

Hermann and Humbert are seen as writers within a work in the throes of recollection and composition. Nabokov's play of synchronized action between the murderer and victim or the model and mimic and the substantial difference in the degree of knowledge that exists between author-narrator-reader create multiple levels of parody.

The author of Le Voyeur and La Jalousie leaves his enigmas perpetually inconclusive or open. In chapter five on "Omission and Techniques of Retardation," we analyze Robbe-Grillet's procedure of découpage which causes his narratives to be arranged through the systematic elaboration and refinement of conjectures or more specifically, through the repetition of what we term formal and less formal hypotheses.

Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet, each in his own unique manner, undermined the expected conventions of the popular genre and found delight in assimilating, recombining and exhausting its properties. Some of the most innovative variations on the plot structure of the detective genre are visible in Borges' stories, on narrative perspective in Nabokov's novels, and on techniques in Robbe-Grillet's works. Thus, our inquiry not only enlightens us about the appropriation of a popular genre as template or model in modern literature but also offers new insights into the poetics of the detective genre itself.

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INTRODUCTION

> "Bach once turned an aria about sensuality into one of his most religious arias. In addition to the art of inventing, there's often the delight of making variations."
>
> F. Dürrenmatt*

Variations on the Detective Story

The first word of the title of our thesis "Variations on the Detective Story" evokes the world of music — the world of such celebrated musical pieces as Beethoven's *DreiunddreiBig Veränderungen über einen Waltzer von Diabelli*, Op. 120, Brahms' *Variationen und Fuge über ein Thema von Händel*, Op. 24, or more recently Max Reger's *Variationen und Fuge über ein Thema von Mozart*, Op. 132. In the same manner as Beethoven or Brahms arranged variations on a theme, the authors we have chosen to examine — Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet, have made variations on a structure or model, in this case, the detective story. In music, we recognize the technique of variation when a composer such as Brahms or Reger, captivated by a work of Handel or Mozart, writes another musical score based on the rearrangement of their compositions. Although the composer transforms the theme, some distinguishable trait of the original work must be preserved. The title of the new interpretation expresses the composer's indebtedness to another musician.

In the realm of music, the concept of variation implies a closed field: the composer remains within the world of music since his composition is inspired by another work. Any definition of the technique of variation will underline the fact that it is a phenomenon of imitation: "la transformation d'un élément musical, repris sous différents aspects, mais toujours reconnaissable."[1] While a composer creates a variation on a theme, he pays homage to a predecessor and also indulges in a delightful exercise.

If we should take the definition of variation as given above and substitute the words 'detective story' for the word 'musical,' we would arrive at a close approximation of the meaning of the title of our thesis: "la transformation [des] élément[s] [du roman policier], repris sous différents aspects, mais toujours reconnaissable." The technique of variation as it applies to detective fiction can be seen as a re-examination and a reconstruction of elements of a well-defined formula or rigorous pattern. Thus, a reader can consider the pattern or schema of the detective story as "une armature familière" which an author absorbs and transforms.[2]

The aesthetic principle of making variations on the detective story pattern did not begin with such modern authors as Jorge Luis Borges or Michel Butor. The detective story was masterly fashioned and introduced in fiction by Edgar Allan Poe. After him, all authors who used the pattern and determining properties of the detective story were intimately acquainted with his 'tales of ratiocination.' In a way, we can conceive of all subsequent tales and novels of mystery and investigation as 'variations on a story or stories by Poe.'[3] Writers like Arthur Conan Doyle and Israel Zangwill and Ellery Queen made relatively slight variations and remained faithful to Poe's famous tales. These authors worked within the established rules and tried to maintain and conform to the strict conventions of the genre. As we move from Dupin to Sherlock Holmes, for example, the transformation of hero, narrative viewpoint, plot structure is quite minimal. In modern literature, the transformation of the properties of the detective story are much more drastic. The variations which authors like Jorge Luis Borges, Vladimir Nabokov and Alain Robbe-Grillet, to name only a few, exert on the genre expose admirably its flexibility, vitality, and creative range. These modern authors are bold and original in their reversals or outright dismissals of many conventions. However, that is not to say that the major elements are not present in their works. On the contrary, an author must know the popular genre before attempting the variation.

The idea of variation can be used to characterize not only the entire tradition of detective fiction since Poe, but could also be made to refer to each author individually. Authors of detective stories are notorious for their prolific writings. Simenon, for example, has written over a hundred stories about Maigret. We can think of each one of his stories as a variation on his vision of the ideal detective story.[4] Significantly, one of our authors, although much less voluminous, often uses the term variation in a related context. In many of his prefaces, Borges alludes to the fact that all his stories are slight variations on favorite themes. He envisages his oeuvre as the continual rewriting of the same story: "A storyteller has but few stories to tell; he needs to tell them anew, over and over again, in all their possible variations."[5] Since he looks upon his stories as similar in their plots and ideas, he speaks of his ficciones not only as "ligera variación" but even facetiously qualifies them as "hartas repeticiones."[6]

To many readers and critics, the concept of variation inherent in detective fiction causes them apprehension and alarm. They believe the genre is inferior because it contains a distinct pattern, or in other words, is formulaic in nature. The opposite point of view is also tenable: a predictive pattern can contribute to the artistic merit of the text.

The technique of variation brings to the detective story an aesthetic value. Consequently, the poetics of detective fiction deserves serious attention. In this thesis, we will argue, with Bertolt Brecht, that the notion of variation on a schema is not detrimental to the creation of innovative works of literature.

> Le fait qu'une caractéristique du roman policier consiste à exécuter des variations sur des éléments plus ou moins constants élève le genre tout entier au niveau esthétique.
> A notre époque, il n'y a peut-être que les romans policiers parmi les productions d'un niveau artistique supérieur à posséder la santé que représente un schéma. 7

* * *

Popular Literature

Do you know the story of the Professor at a university who would relax from his scholarly duty of writing a book on Dostoevsky by taking out from a hidden corner of his library a copy of a detective story? This Professor proudly displayed his books on Dostoevsky yet he felt very embarrassed about his great collection of detective fiction. Why? In the eyes of scholars and critics, the detective tale constitutes a genre apart from the mainstream of literature, it is a subordinate genre. The novels of Balzac, Hugo, Dickens or Dostoevsky are considered classical or "high" literature and the novels of Collins, Gaboriau, Simenon, Greene are labelled "low" or popular literature. An author and critic like E. M. Forster will note in his respected Aspects of the Novel that he could never admit to his appreciation of detective fiction: "And now briefly to illustrate the mystery element in the plot ... I will take an example, not from ... Conan Doyle (whom my priggishness prevents me from enjoying)."[8] Many scholars and critics continue to propagate this view of the divisions or elevations in the arts. They strive to maintain the traditional hierarchy. Hence, they relegate detective fiction, science fiction ... to the rank of para-literature.

Unlike most scholars and critics, authors are generally more venturesome and less priggish. They tend to approve of any form of art that is remarkable for its merit and originality without making undue reservations about its status as "high" or "low". The most influential novelists in the nineteenth century like Balzac, Hugo, Dickens and Dostoevsky borrowed extensively from popular literature. It has been conclusively demonstrated by critics as Leonid Grossman and Michael Holquist, for instance, that Dostoevsky transfused new blood into the novel genre because of his adaptation of forms of popular literature.[9] There are, in fact, undeniable elements of detective fiction in the works of such authors as Dickens or Dostoevsky. Readers are often unaware that the differentiation between popular and serious literature is of recent origin. When Collins' The Moonstone was first published it was not judged inferior to other novels because of its subject matter. The writer and critic of detective stories, Julian Symons, explains how "no Victorian critic thought that The Moonstone was a poorer kind of book than Trollope's novel. It is a latter-day distinction between levels of brow that has placed the crime novel in the position of Cinderella."[10]

In the nineteenth century, authors as Dickens and Dostoevsky broke down the barriers between literature which possessed mass or popular appeal and literature which was for the elite or the more learned. Likewise, in our century, it is the authors in the forefront of new movements or of the avant-garde that are the most outspoken in their recognition of all types of art and expression. These authors have been able to avoid all snobishness in their enjoyment of art. Authors like Borges and Nabokov, for example, without any embarrassment or explication, speak about their love of Buster Keaton, the Marx brothers, Laurel and Hardy, their preference for such films as von Sternberg's Underworld, Chaplin's City Lights and Hitchcock's North by Northwest, and such well-acclaimed movies as Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari, Casablanca and Dr. Strangelove.[11] Not only do these authors communicate their enthusiasm for popular culture, but we can notice how they have absorbed and used materials and ideas from popular literature and art. A critic like Alfred Appel Jr. demonstrates in a fascinating book-length study on Nabokov the influence of sub-literary genres on the writings of an age. He finds fault with literary critics who dismiss the subject of popular culture from their treatment of the history and development of modern literature:

> Literary historians who ignore popular culture are ahistorical; ... they cannot perceive or describe the exact achievements of the many 'serious' writers since Joyce who have variously absorbed and utilized popular materials (West, Graham Greene), nor recognize the excellence of 'popular' writers who worked within and transcended the limitations of sub-literary genres (Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler ...).[12]

There are two excellent but very different theories which can be used to support an argument in favor of the merging of popular culture with the more traditional or classical art. One theory, expounded by Viktor Shklovsky, is based on the concept of "creative deformation" and the other, proposed by Northrop Frye, is rooted in the vision of a cohesiveness or basic unity in all of literature. These two theories which are in essence a critique of habitualization and a systematization of archetypes can be made to explain and validate the marriage of the popular and the traditional.

Shklovsky's aesthetic theory, especially the concept of ostranenie, when introduced into the field of literary history, can explain the constant transformations of literary genres and movements. In itself, the idea of defamiliarization was at first developed as an aesthetic theory referring primarily to stylistic studies. The ultimate aim of literature and all arts, according to Shklovsky, is to render the too familiar more unique and pristine in its essence, or to use his words, "to make the stone stony."[13] The act of perception is at the center of this idea of making the familiar less familiar. There will be an heightened awareness on the part of the beholder or the reader because the aesthetic object has been removed from its everyday habitual context. This idea of defamiliarization is not static. Since the beholder soon learns to 'see', the objects gradually become less and less new and strange. Consequently, the once unusual objects finally become so customary and ordinary that they are no longer seen. We can deduce from this idea that the history of literary movements and styles is this incessant dialectic process which moves from defamiliarization to conventionalization and then from conventionalization to defamiliarization. Therefore, the history of the novel can be viewed as "a dialectic of defamiliarization in which new techniques of representation ultimately generate countertechniques...."[14] The Russian theorist and author, always very fond of popular literature, particularly the detective story genre, often commented on how this idea of ostranenie served to explicate the fusion of the popular and the traditional in order to give rise to new and original literary works. These transformations occasion a defamiliarization and a perpetual renewal of traditional models. Gérard Genette reminds us of how Shklovsky found pleasure in witnessing the rejuvenation of literary forms:

> Chklovski et Tynianov, en particulier, ont étudié dans la littérature russe ces variations fonctionnelles qui font passer, par exemple, une même forme d'un rang mineur à celui de "forme canonique," et qui entretiennent une transfusion perpétuelle entre la littérature populaire et la littérature officielle, entre l'académisme et l' "avant-garde," ... Ainsi, Pouchkine importe dans la grande poésie les effets des vers d'album du XVIIIe siècle, Nekrassov emprunte au journalisme et au vaudeville, Blok à la chanson tzigane, Dostoïevski au roman policier.[15]

The existence of a rigid pattern or formula in detective fiction is usually the feature which critics condemn, however, there is one eminent theorist who sees this formulaic nature as the norm of all literature. The underlying idea behind Northrop Frye's criticism is that the imagination can only create the very predictable or the very conventional. He defines the archetype "the cornerstone of the creative imagination" as a simple "formulaic unit" and has pointed out how all plot-outlines and motifs are structured "on formulas with a minimum of variables."[16] In his recent book on the romance genre, Frye alludes to the structure of detective stories. In his opinion, the formulaic pattern of detective fiction is no less rigid and conventionalized than the folktale, romance or tragedy. Although Frye does not pretend to have an extensive knowledge of detective fiction, he does not see any reason why the detective genre could not be the subject of scholarly study. Since all literature is in some way formulaic, why should the detective story not have a rightful place in the scope of literary criticism? The fact that it is more formulaic than other genres should not exclude it from serious analysis.

> In the general area of romance we find highly stylized patterns like the detective story, which are so conventionalized as to resemble games. We expect each game of chess to be different, but we do not want the conventions of the game itself to alter, or to see a chess game in which the bishops move in straight lines and the rooks diagonally. Whether we consider detective stories worth reading or not depends on our willingness to accept the convention. ... Now if we do find wit, lively plotting, vivid characterization, or cogent social comment in detective stories - and it is not so difficult to find such things - we should appreciate the author's ingenuity in getting good writing into so ritualistic a form. *The right next step for criticism it seems to me, is not to assume that there is a difference in value between detective fiction and other types of fiction, but to realize that all fiction is conventionalized*. [17]

The structural vision of formulaic literature and the historical view of fiction as a dialectic process of defamiliarization prove very pertinent and engaging arguments. Nevertheless, although Frye and Shklovsky are very persuasive in their theories, we expect that their acceptance of popular literature will not disturb scholars who are deeply rooted in their dismissal of detective fiction. However, in the near future, we look forward to serious investigations on popular literature, specifically detective stories, because they are more prevalent in modern literature. This change of attitude towards popular literature will be due in the end to such writers as Borges, Nabokov, Robbe-Grillet or Cortázar, Pynchon and Fowles who have seen the aesthetic possibilities of the detective story genre. These authors, through their appropriation and innovative variations on the genre, have given the detective story the attention it rightly deserves. Critics will surely follow suit.

* * *

Methodological Approach

Our critical inquiry is one of the first to demonstrate the appropriation and transformation of the detective story by modern novelists or short story writers. This inquiry should enlighten us about a facet of the art of such authors as Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet and at the same time instruct us about the poetics of the detective genre itself. Our analysis, therefore, comprises two processes: first, to know the fundamental properties of this popular genre, and second, to show how these properties have been transmitted and reshaped into the works of our authors.

Many modern authors have recognized how the predictive structure or the conventions of the detective story can be given a new freshness and significance. Contemporary writers delight in assimilating, recombining and exhausting elements of the detective genre. This literary trend should prompt critics to look more closely at the detective story _per se_. As one of these critics, we have been led to detective stories because of their prominence in modern literary texts. We are interested in discovering the nature and gauging the extent of the influence of detective fiction on authors like Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet. This type of analysis almost demands to be undertaken in the light of modern literature. Given the self-reflective nature of much of contemporary fiction, the detective story and its closed world of invention and artifice was naturally appealing to modern authors like

Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet.

It is difficult to assess and compare the modern literary adaptation and variation with the original since the aesthetics of the popular detective story remain relatively unexamined. There are many histories of the genre, usually written by detective authors, but few careful studies of the stories themselves.[18] There is much truth behind Butor's affirmation that detective fiction has not received the critical attention required for a good understanding of the properties and mechanics of the genre:

> Le genre policier est un genre qui n'a pas été étudié comme il le mériterait. Il y a des tas de choses très variées à l'intérieur de ces règles très strictes. Et, il y a beaucoup d'auteurs qui ont essayé de voir jusqu'où on pouvait aller dans une certaine direction.[19]

A critic cannot hope to correctly analyze the modern experiments with the detective story if he does not know beforehand the essential features and rules of the genre.

The title of our thesis presupposes the two part division of our study - before an analysis of the variations on the detective story we need to construct a theoretical basis. The theory which we establish in our second chapter presents an ideal model of a detective story. In our elaboration of our model or prototext, we take into account the critical theorists who have contributed most to the examination of the genre. Hence, in our synthesis of the detective story, we use terms and ideas brought forward by the Russian formalists and the structuralists. The critics of these two schools who have been especially curious about popular forms as the detective story are Shklovsky and Todorov.[20] Apart from these two theorists, we also borrow terms from Barthes' 'hermeneutic code' and ideas on narrators and retardation from Genette.[21] We also acknowledge the usefulness of the critical treatises of Caillois and Champigny on the techniques of detective fiction.[22] All these critics have assisted us in the elaboration of the five main points of our prototext.

Detective stories exhibit a very rigid pattern and definite properties. We define these fundamental features of the genre as our prototext or constant. Our operative model thus consists of five salient features: 1) the detective story plot structure of mystery, investigation and solution; 2) the relation between the central opponents — murderer and detective; 3) the two stories in the narrative and the two time spans: the past story leading to the crime or the first story and the present story reconstructing the crime or the second story; 4) the narrators — their self-consciousness and unreliability; 5) omission and the techniques of retardation and obfuscation in the narrative. Therefore, it is with some of these constant properties in mind that an author can recombine, transform and make variations. We conclude our presentation of the prototext by indicating how these conventions of the genre can be exposed to parody or how they can be related to other literary traditions, as the fantastic.

What are some of the elements of the prototext which an author can transpose and how are these main elements alluded to or incorporated into an author's text? The subsequent chapters of our thesis will endeavor to answer these questions. Our third chapter refers directly to the first three points of our prototext and proposes to show how the form of the detective story lends itself to very different sets of arrangements or restructurings of the plot pattern. We should not have to be reminded, by an author like Borges, of the importance of plots in a detective story. Everything in detective fiction is subordinate to the presiding design or plot pattern. [23] Hence, one way for an author to transform the genre and thereby generate new meaning is through plot manipulation. Another determining method used to reshape the mystery and its resolution is the alteration of traditional narrative viewpoints. In addition, techniques associated with the major omission and minor gaps are utilized to heighten and maintain the mystery. Of course, plot structure, narrative perspective, and techniques of retardation work together in the production of a detective text. These three components of a narrative are separated for our purpose of analysis, but in the text, they are interdependent. For example, when techniques perpetually retain the enigma, the result is an open-ended plot; or when the murderer holds the narrative viewpoint, the detective plot is inverted. In order to explore these three main procedures of transformation, we will examine how Borges reworks plot structure in the third chapter, how Nabokov radically shifts the narrative viewpoint in the fourth chapter, and how Robbe-Grillet relies totally on omissions and repetitions in the fifth chapter.

A critical study could be devoted to each of our authors individually and his unique variations on the detective story. Virtually all the short stories and novels of our authors could be analyzed in conjunction with the detective genre: Borges' narratives from "Hombre de la esquina rosada" to "Episodio del enemigo"; Nabokov's works from his early novelette The Eye to his autobiography Speak, Memory and to Pale Fire; Robbe-Grillet's texts and ciné-romans from Un Régicide to L'Immortelle. [24] More precisely, for our present purpose, the texts to be inspected with respect to Borges are taken from his collections Ficciones (1944) and El Aleph (1949) and include especially "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," "La muerte y la brújula," "El fin," "La escritura del Dios," and "La espera"; concerning Nabokov, we consider Despair (1936) and Lolita (1955); and for Robbe-Grillet, we look mostly at Les Gommes (1953), Le Voyeur (1955) and La Jalousie (1957).

The fact that detective story properties inform the structure and techniques of modern novels has been pointed out by a few critics. We are thus in an enviable position. On the one hand, the topic has been identified by critics of modern culture and modern literature, however, on the other hand, it has not been treated in a comprehensive study. Critics of contemporary literature have made insightful comments about the impact of the popular genre on a number of modern authors. Michael Holquist, in an important article, emphasizes Borges and Robbe-Grillet as authors who have been very original in their use of the detective story as sub-text.[25] M.V. Spanos, in his seminal essay, defined his idea of the modern 'anti-detective' novel.[26] These early articles were well received — for example, John Cawelti repeats quite closely Holquist's postulations in his brief discussion of detective fiction in modern texts.[27]

Apart from these critics and their general remarks about the status of the detective story, few studies actually explore one individual author and his relation to the detective genre. Most of the critics of Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet, in fact, fail to even notice the presence of detective elements in their narratives. Nevertheless, usually one excellent critic of each of our authors has seen the kinship or link between the detective genre and the modern work. The most noteworthy critics are Alter and Janvier for the Nouveau Roman, Appel for Nabokov and Anderson Imbert and Rodriguez Monegal for Borges.[28] Since few specialists concern themselves with this topic, it is encouraging to find cogent statements by critics as Holquist and Appel who have commented on the prevalence and the significance of the detective form in modern literature. Holquist and Appel explain how the well-known conventions of the detective genre are a vital force in many works of modern literature:

> ... two leading Post-Modernists play with the conventions of the detective story, mining the genre for plots and surprises. ... Robbe-Grillet and Borges depend on the audience's familiarity with the conventions of the detective story to provide the subtext they may then play with by defeating expectations.[29]
>
> Nabokov ... is not alone in recognizing that the genre's properties are well-suited to the fictive treatment of metaphysical questions and problems of identity and perception. Thus — along with other contemporary writers as Graham Greene (Brighton Rock, 1938), Raymond Queneau (Pierrot mon ami [Pierrot], 1942), Jorge Luis Borges ("Death and the Compass," "An Examination of the Work of Herbert Quain," "The Garden of Forking Paths" ... and "The South"), Alain Robbe-Grillet (Les Gommes, 1953), Michel Butor (L'Emploi du temps, 1956), and Thomas Pynchon (V., 1963) — Nabokov has often transmuted or parodied the forms, techniques, and themes of the detective story, as in Despair, The Real Life of Sebastian Knight, Lolita and, less directly, in The Eye ...[30]

Evidently, it is now very apropos to heed and to endorse Ludovic Janvier's correct contention that the detective story deserves to be taken seriously, and not only by the Nouveau Roman writers: "En somme, le Nouveau Roman, c'est le roman policier pris au sérieux."[31]

This bunching together of authors who have used the detective form, as we see above in Appel's quotation, gives us an accurate and yet a very erroneous impression. It is true that these authors are united in their appropriation of a common pattern and similiar techniques. However, these authors are very unique and personal in their transformations of detective elements.

It is one thing to notice in a schematic essay the prevalence and importance of detective fiction and quite another to demonstrate in a full-fledged argument the nature and function of this influence. We develop a critical approach which keeps in mind the specificity of the detective genre. We believe that the procedure which we have instituted could be utilized in the analysis of other authors who have made use of properties of detective stories or even of other stylized or predictive structures. Thus, our methodological approach should contribute to a greater understanding of how a popular genre can serve as a template or model for a literary text.

* * *

CHAPTER ONE

"I tore apart the fantasies of Poe."

V. Nabokov

JORGE LUIS BORGES, VLADIMIR NABOKOV, ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET: INTERTEXTUALITY AND ARTIFICE

Authors as Readers of Detective Stories

The topic of our inquiry is to consider and analyze critically how Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet have absorbed and transformed the detective story in order to create new forms and new meanings in modern literature. Before this interesting task is undertaken, it would be advisable to examine our authors' insightful comments about the detective genre as found in their interviews, critical writings and also in their novels or short stories. Have Borges, Nabokov or Robbe-Grillet ever alluded to favorite detective writers? Have our authors brought to attention special attributes of the detective tale or even acknowledged their indebtedness to some detective writers? Has Robbe-Grillet spoken of the influence of either Borges or Nabokov on his works? The answers to these questions, always pertinent to comparative analyses (indeed, many comparative studies remain at this level), will prove conclusively that our three authors, like Dunraven and Unwin, are 'steeped in detective fiction.'

Our objective in this chapter will be, firstly, to review the ideas and references made to detective fiction in the non-fictional writings of our authors. We will then note how principally Borges and Nabokov, in compliance with a convention of the popular genre, have included direct allusions to detective writers or detective heroes within their fictional works. Apart from these references and allusions, we will discuss, in a third section, how our authors have all turned to the detective story especially because of its very rigid and predictive form or plot structure. In a last analysis, we shall address the topic of Borges and Nabokov as forerunners of the very dynamic modern trend of borrowing from the detective story to inject new life into literary works.

As seasoned readers of Sherlock Holmes and Ellery Queen, each of our authors has avowed his keen interest and bracing pleasure in the popular genre. Vladimir Nabokov's admiration of detective heroes is more readily observed in his novels whereas Alain Robbe-Grillet's attachment to the genre is explained in a critical essay. All our authors are versed in the subject of tales of ratiocination and thrillers. However, Jorge Luis Borges, because of his great enthusiasm and extensive knowledge of the detective genre, has the honor of being spokesman and thus presents the comparatist with a perfect specimen for the study of influences and relations.

One of our authors, Jorge Luis Borges, has been, since the 1930's, an ardent admirer and zealous propagator of the detective genre. His treasured topic of conversation whenever he is interviewed happens to be precisely detective fiction — in particular, the tightly-woven and contrived plot structure inherent in the genre. Of course, we all know that Borges' reading taste leans towards the unconventional: he is an expert not only of detective tales and gangster films, but also of westerns, science fiction and fantastic tales.[1] Since Borges is so conversant with these popular forms, a critic who does not have some familiarity with them, and in our case with detective fiction, cannot fully grasp the author's unique handling and reshaping of the detective story.

Indubitably, Borges has been very influential in the dissemination of information and the generating of excitement about a much-maligned genre. Let us briefly outline the salient points which pertain to Borges' career as writer of detective fiction and also as translator, critical reviewer, compiler, and director of publications relating to the detective genre. Borges has written some of his best ficciones — "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," "La muerte y la brújula" and "Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto" - under the rubric of a detective story or a parody of a detective story (indeed, his first two stories were sent for publication to the Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine).[2] These stories, as our thesis shall demonstrate, do not stand aloof or differ from his other stories, rather they are completely integrated into his oeuvre. We may note how Borges, in partnership with Bioy Casares, also engaged in the writing of the detective novels Seis problemas para don Isidro Parodi (1942) and Un modelo para la muerte (1946) and adapted detective stories, notably the works of Agatha Christie, into plays or screenplays. Borges' skill as a translator may be evaluated by reading, for example, his translation of Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Red-Headed League." The Argentine advocate played an important role by reviewing innumerable detective stories; in the 1930's and 1940's, he was the official critical reviewer of detective fiction for the periodical Sur. As exponent of the genre, Borges compiled two anthologies of detective stories which include authors of his choice as Poe, Doyle, Chesterton, Zangwill ... .[3] Besides his active role as reviewer and compiler, Borges contributed to the recognition of the best detective stories by directing the publication of a series devoted to detective fiction. In an interview with Burgin, Borges relates how these publications enabled the general public to discover that a detective story could be well-polished and well-formed:

> I was a director of a series called The Seventh Circle, and we published some hundred and fifty detective novels. We began with Nicholas Blake; we went on to Michael Innes, then to Wilkie Collins, then to Dickens' Mystery of Edwin Drood, then to different American and English writers, and it had a huge success, because the idea that a detective story could also be literary was a new idea in the Argentine. ... I think that those books did a lot of good, because they reminded writers that plots were important. If you read detective novels, and if you take up other novels afterwards, the first thing that strikes you — ... is to think of the other books as being shapeless.[4]

Even today, Borges continues to write prefaces and reviews — for instance, he appended a prologue with his customary words of praise for Poe, Zangwill, Anthony Berkeley to Donald Yates' recent translation of Manuel Peyrou's El estruendo de las rosas.[5] Because of all his writings and activities, one can very easily ascertain why Borges is at the fountainhead of a surfacing of the detective form in Spanish-America. He has rightly been called "a sort of patron to the detective story."[6] And like Borges, the Spanish-American authors have been attracted to the formal exigencies of the detective plot in the structuring of their own works: "These writers produced detective fiction in much the same way as did Poe — using its structure as an external form which conveniently lent itself to the expression of a certain set of ideas or vision."[7] The best indication of Borges' predominance in the world of detective fiction can be observed in the detective writers John and Emery Bonett, whose detective novel situates an action in Spain and depicts the unpretentious 'Inspector Borges.'[8]

Borges, in his interviews, for example with Milleret or Vázquez, often notes his abiding fascination for a few detective story writers: "My interest in detective fiction is rooted in my reading of Edgar Allan

Poe, Wilkie Collins, Robert Louis Stevenson's The Wrecker, G.K. Chesterton, Eden Phillpotts, and, of course, Ellery Queen."[9] Among the selected list of authors, Borges deems Poe, but above all Chesterton, as most instrumental to his own writings. In his famous early prologue to the stories in Historia universal de la infamia, Borges acknowledges the inspiring force primarily of von Sternberg's gangster films and Chesterton's detective stories on his own tales of hoodlums and gauchos: "Los ejercicios de prosa narrativa que integran este libro fueron ejecutados de 1933 a 1934. Derivan, creo, de mis relecturas de Stevenson y de Chesterton y aun de los primeros films de von Sternberg y tal vez de cierta biografía de Evaristo Carriego."[10] He refers to Chesterton as the master of the detective story and always resorts to his stories as criterion or touchstone when he evaluates the writings of the genre. Borges insists on disclosing how his own fictions exhibit traces of the Father Brown stories. A pertinent case in point may be seen in his following comparison:" "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" est, comme beaucoup de contes de Chesterton, un conte détectivesque et poétique à la fois. De même, "La muerte y la brújula," que j'ai écrit aussi en pensant un peu à Chesterton, a beaucoup de choses worked in, inlaid."[11]

Borges' reading of Chesterton was indispensable for the development of his own aesthetics. His main ideas about the elaboration of plots were formulated in his early and crucial essay "El arte narrativo y la magia" (1932). We learn from this essay, which includes many examples from Chesterton, that Borges is curious about unique plot structures that discard causal logic and reason. Many tenets and even phrases taken from this important essay recur in his subsequent three essays on Chesterton and his style of writing detective fiction: "Los laberintos policiales y Chesterton" (1935), "Modos de G.K. Chesterton" (1936), and "Sobre Chesterton" (1937-1952).[12] Three main points are clearly discernible in these essays: Borges appreciates Chesterton's contrivance of plots, his visual imagination, and his ability to weave a fantastic plot and then dispel the inexplicable with a rational analysis. All three ideas are, of course, highly significant when we examine Borges' own _ficciones_. However, when he expounded his poetics, Borges was particularly impressed with Chesterton's procedure of commingling the fantastic with the rational:

> _Necesidad y maravilla en la solución_. ... Chesterton, siempre, realiza el _tour de force_ de proponer una aclaración sobrenatural y de reemplazarla luego, sin pérdida, con otra de este mundo.
>
> Edgar Allan Poe escribió cuentos de puro horror fantástico o de pura _bizarrerie_; Edgar Allan Poe fue inventor del cuento policial. Ello no es menos indudable que el hecho de que no combinó los dos géneros. ... En cambio, Chesterton prodigó con pasión y felicidad esos _tours de force_. Cada una de las piezas de la Saga del Padre Brown presenta un misterio, propone explicaciones de tipo demoníaco o mágico y las reemplaza, al fin, con otras que son de este mundo.[13]

In due course, as Borges once forecasted in a memorable line "El hecho es que cada escritor _crea_ a sus precursores."[14] Inevitably, Borges himself, by sheer enthusiasm for 'Chestertonian storytelling,' established his own ideal precursor and placed him alongside of Poe and Kafka: "Chesterton se defendió de ser Edgar Allan Poe o Franz Kafka, pero que algo en el barro de su yo propendía a la pesadilla."[15] At the same time, Borges enhanced the stature of Chesterton in the world of letters.

It is very paradoxical that although Borges is excessively concise in his stories, he should be so fluent in his discussion of detective fiction. Nabokov, on the other hand, remains reticent about his reading of detective fiction and about the influence of the genre on his work. Nevertheless, a few cursory remarks may be assessed. We should not lose from sight the fact that (even though Nabokovian critics have never mentioned it) Nabokov began writing in exile in Germany when the formalists were influential in his homeland and when critics like Shklovsky had a predilection for popular genres and for self-reflective works as detective stories or Tristram Shandy. In all probability, this new critical school which brought these genres into the limelight had a great impact upon the nascent genius of Nabokov.[16] In spite of his discretion at interviews, Nabokov hinted, while divulging childhood reminiscences, that he had been held spellbound by marionettes, puppets, clowns and by the adventures of Phileas Fogg and Sherlock Holmes (exactly like little Luzhin in The Defense). Nabokov admitted that he is no longer enthralled with 'boyish heroes' as Fogg or Holmes:

> I relished especially the works of Wells, Poe, Browning .... On another level, my heroes were the Scarlet Pimpernel, Phileas Fogg, and Sherlock Holmes .... Of these top favorites, several — Poe, Jules Verne, Emmuska Orczy, Conan Doyle, and Rupert Brooke — have lost the glamour and thrill they held for me.[17]

However, Nabokov maintained links with the detective story by enjoying popular literature and thriller films. For instance, he sensed a contiguity between Hitchcock's parodic films and his own novels: "Actually, I've seen very little Hitchcock, ... but I admire his craftsmanship. I fondly recall at least one film of his, about someone named Harry"(The Trouble with Harry, 1955). ... his humour noir is akin to my humour noir, if that's what it should be called."[18] Notwithstanding Nabokov's infrequent declarations about popular forms, and detective fiction in particular, his novels are replete with allusions to the marginal genres — the detective story, the western, gangster films, and pornographic works.[19]

Nabokov is well-known for his love of chess problems and his transposition of these exact problems in his fictional works. His autobiography Speak, Memory, clearly reveals that the author views himself as a chess master: problems are imagined, pursued and solved in the narrative and the 'value' of the challenging problem is weighed against its degree of difficulty. Thus, Nabokov's novels become compositions and variations of chess problems where the chess-men are the heroes but ostensibly the game played is not only between the opponents in the story but also between the author and the reader.

> Themes in chess, it may be explained, are such devices as forelaying, withdrawing, pinning, unpinning and so forth; but it is only when they are combined in a certain way that a problem is satisfying. Deceit, to the point of diabolism, and originality, verging upon the grotesque, were my notions of strategy;....
>
> It should be understood that competition in chess problems is not really between White and Black but between the composer and the hypothetical solver (just as in a first-rate work of fiction the real clash is not between the characters but between the author and the world), so that a great part of a problem's value is due to the number of 'tries' — delusive opening moves, false scents, specious lines of play, astutely and lovingly prepared to lead the would-be solver astray.[20]

The pawns moving across the chess-board manipulated by the hand of the chess master or, as we mentioned above, the marionettes and puppets guided by the strings of the theater-director, are all analogous metaphors that evince Nabokov's role as author and his world of illusion and deception. Like Poe before him, Nabokov always enjoyed the world of chess; he translated into Russian a novel based on chess — Through the Looking-Glass and published, along with poems, some chess problems.[21] In fact, the chess game and its implications find poetic expression in all of Nabokov's novelistic writings, from King, Queen, Knave (1928) to Pale Fire (1962). In the "regular chess attack," patterns and moves are set up and the action and tension is maintained between opponents until finally one opponent proves himself superior to the other.[22] As we shall later indicate, the game of chess is one of the most appropriate and best metaphors to illustrate the pattern and structure behind the game plan of the opponents in detective fiction. It is no wonder that detective writers like Baroness Orczy, Dorothy Sayers, or Raymond Chandler often integrate or infer a game of chess in their narrative. Enterprising critics are only beginning to inspect the pattern of the chess game and the detective story in Nabokov's novels.[23]

Robbe-Grillet's interest in the detective mode has never waned; in fact, his recent novels demonstrate that he is incorporating and refining more than ever the 'low' forms of literature such as the 'tough' crime and adventure novels, the gangster comic strips, and the violent pornographic novels. The narrative of many assassinations, Projet pour une révolution à New York, could easily be compared to such erotic detective stories as No Orchids for Miss Blandish by James Hadley Chase.[24] This affinity for para-literature has not often been directly expressed by Robbe-Grillet in interviews and essays. However, to a critic like Morrissette, Robbe-Grillet has avowed that he is cognizant of the French, British, and American writers of detective fiction. He appreciates, for example, the work of Faulkner (most of his novels are detective in nature) and espionage literature. And many times, he reads detective writers for their aesthetic limits: their works can serve as a lever for further technical experimentation. For instance, he asserts that such novels of Graham Greene as Brighton Rock and The Heart of the Matter spur him to devise new variations from the given action of the texts:

"Les romans de Greene, ... m'ont souvent donné envie de les récrire."[25] Although Robbe-Grillet has remained relatively silent on the issue of his reading of detective writers, Butor, in an interview on the Nouveau Roman's use of the detective story, strangely devoted most of his remarks to Robbe-Grillet. It is obvious to Butor that his compeer is a versatile author with expertise in derivative genres of the detective story:

> Il est certain que le roman du type Série Noire a influencé un certain nombre d'auteurs du nouveau roman. ... Il y a des romans policiers de type classique, de type anglais, qui aussi a [ont] beaucoup influencé des livres comme Les Gommes ou L'Emploi du temps. Certainement il y a une grande influence des auteurs du type américain sur Robbe-Grillet.[26]

The aesthetic premises that Robbe-Grillet developed were first enunciated using the detective story as a point of reference. It is very significant and interesting that the 'roman policier' assisted him in explaining his aesthetic theories. The philosophical principle behind Robbe-Grillet's new 'objective' or 'realistic' style is clearly stated in "Une voie pour le roman futur." Robbe-Grillet advances the idea that man is completely disjoined or apart from the universe in which he finds himself — no relation or bond exists between man and the world; or to use Sartre's phrase, man is simply "there."[27] This belief does not entail any feelings of sadness or tragedy: "Or le monde n'est ni signifiant ni absurde. Il est, tout simplement."[28] This vision of man, Robbe-Grillet argues, is in posse in literature: "dans les constructions romanesques futures, gestes et objets seront là avant d'être quelque chose."[29] Since the detective story concentrates primarily on the assumed meanings emanating from objects, gestures, or words, to elucidate a problem, Robbe-Grillet attacked the raison d'être of the investigative task. In every detective story, objects are employed as indices or clues from which the sleuth can gather information, re-create and solve the mysterious event. Whatever interpretation or re-invention the detective infers from the objects pertaining to the crime, he is adding meaning to the inert object and all these implied meanings or solutions are never completely verifiable. To describe the objects, Robbe-Grillet professes, is the only absolute truth the investigator can ever be assured of — everything but the object itself is supposition, invention or surmise. Hence, in a last resort, to obtain this absolute truth, the detective's activity is reduced to the examination, scrutinization and description of objects without the imposition of any meaning:

> Les pièces à conviction du drame policier nous donnent, paradoxalement, une assez juste image de cette situation. Les éléments recueillis par les inspecteurs — objet abandonné sur les lieux du crime, mouvement fixé sur une photographie, phrase entendue par un témoin — semblent surtout, d'abord, appeler une explication, n'exister qu'en fonction de leur rôle dans une affaire qui les dépasse. Voilà déjà que les théories commencent à s'échafauder: le juge d'instruction essaie d'établir un lien logique et nécessaire entre les choses; on croit que tout va se résoudre en un faisceau banal de causes et de conséquences, d'intentions et de hasards...
>
> Mais l'histoire se met à foisonner de façon inquiétante: les témoins se contredisent, l'accusé multiplie les alibis, de nouveaux éléments surgissent dont on n'avait pas tenu compte... Et toujours il faut en revenir aux indices enregistrés: la position exacte d'un meuble, la forme et la fréquence d'une empreinte, le mot inscrit dans un message. On a l'impression, de plus en plus, qu'il n'y a rien d'autre de vrai. Ils peuvent bien cacher un mystère, ou le trahir, ces éléments qui se jouent des systèmes n'ont qu'une[30] qualité sérieuse, évidente, c'est d'être là.

Before we inspect the 'intertextual' references to detective fiction made mainly by Borges and Nabokov in their short stories and novels, we are in a position to entertain a few points of comparison. From our authors' statements in their essays and interviews, we can already observe that Borges' favorite detective writer was evidently Chesterton whereas Nabokov was a fan of Arthur Conan Doyle and Robbe-Grillet liked the Graham Greene type of thriller and spy stories. Also, from their cogent comments, we may affirm that Borges is preoccupied with the detective genre because it fosters the demand for a rigorous plot structure and has the inherent flexibility of combining the fantastic with the rational. For his part, Nabokov is interested in the creation of problems and game patterns endemic to chess and detective stories, and at the same time, he is wary of rules and conventions implied in the notion of games. Robbe-Grillet debunks the investigation process in his essay in order to illustrate his theory, and in the same manner, one presupposes that he will undermine and transcend the norms of the detective story to manifest his own aesthetic vision.

Examples of 'Intertextualité'

The detective genre is, *inter alia*, very self-reflective, that is, very conscious of its own fictionality. The detective story does not seek to hide but rather to display and call attention to itself as an artifact. One way for a detective story to proclaim its meta-fictional or artificial nature is to make allusions to other detective authors and other detective stories within its own narrative world. Most critics now adopt Kristeva's well-received term *intertextualité* to define this procedure of intercalating one or several texts within a narrative. This device of referring to authors or quoting from texts, in other words of *intertextualité*, is very prevalent in detective fiction and has become a special feature in the tradition of the genre. This convention, which will be discussed further in the next chapter, began at the very outset of the genre. Notice how Poe in "The Purloined Letter" alludes to his earlier stories and thereby inserts the third story in the portfolio of his other two tales: "For myself [the narrator], however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening; I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Rogêt."[31] The function of intertextualité in the detective story indicates to the reader that the narrative has tangible bonds or links with other stories of the same genre; the notation is like a secret code or an identification mark that places the narrative firmly under the banner of a specific genre. An author's use of intertextuality is a very effective way for him to divulge his sources and the tradition that has inspired his text. This inspiration is always very close to being or is veritably imitative in nature: an old text, the source of an author's authority, is juxtaposed with a new text. From a comparatist's point of view, intertextuality is interesting because it brings together two or more texts and consequently invites an analysis of this exchange or transference.

The allusions made in a detective story to other detective works may extend from the elementary to the highly complex. For instance, the reference may be a brief remark as in The Spy Who Came In From The Cold where Control, in his only speech in the narrative, advises Leamas of his forthcoming doom by hinting at the basic puzzle in an Agatha Christie story: "Riemeck was the last, Control reflected, the last of a series of deaths. ... Like the ten little niggers."[32] In contrast, the allusion may be far more comprehensive and detailed as illustrated in El estruendo de las rosas where the possible murderer and literary critic Felix Greitz's essay

"Hamlet and the Detective Story" is included in full in the narrative text. The essay propounds the theory that the play Hamlet contains detective elements, proves that there are detective motifs in the works of Chekhov, Balzac, and Hawthorne, and analyzes the stories of Nicholas Blake and Anthony Berkeley.[33] These many intertextual references in the essay transplanted in the narrative are deftly employed by the author since ultimately the detective deciphers the mystery because of his second reading of the Hamlet essay. In both cases, Le Carré and Peyrou have conferred much value on the intertextual reference: there is a profound relation between the allusions in the text and the narrative itself. Thus, as Culler explains, these references "provide a grid through which the narrative is read and structured." [34]

An author can introduce,in his narrative, references to detective writers, detective stories or to any convention of the genre in multifarious and distinctive ways. Let us take the example of references made to Poe as a case in point. We may observe how Doyle in "The Resident Patient," Chesterton in "The Blue Cross" and E.C. Bentley in Trent's Last Case specify the name of Poe in a passage of their detective tale or novel. Each of these references implies a comparison between Dupin's investigative method and the method of inquiry adopted in the narratives. Due to the compounding of an allusion to Poe within another story, Dupin's method is viewed in a new light and the narrative reflects more than its immediate context. Furthermore, each writer has in mind a specific Dupin story:

> You remember, said he, that some little time ago when
> I read you a passage in one of Poe's sketches, in which
> a close reasoner follows the unspoken thoughts of his
> companion, you were inclined to treat the matter as a
> mere tour de force of the author.
>
> (Doyle — "The Murders in the Rue Morgue")

> ... there is in life an element of elfin coincidence which people reckoning on the prosaic may perpetually miss. As it has been well expressed in the paradox of Poe, wisdom should reckon on the unforeseen.
> (Chesterton — "The Purloined Letter")
>
> In this letter he did very much what Poe had done in the case of the murder of Mary Rogers. With nothing but the newspapers to guide him, he drew attention to the significance of certain apparently negligible facts ...[35]
> (Bentley — "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt")

We intend to underline the most enlightening intertextual references to the detective genre found in our authors' fictional works. We will distinguish, in particular, the allusions made to characters (usually the detective), to writers, and to important statements noting or undercutting accepted conventions of the genre. We know, of course, that the technique of inner duplication has been widely used by Nouveau Roman writers in general. These inner duplications, as in Butor's _L'Emploi du temps_, often make direct references to techniques of detective fiction – in the case of Butor's novel, to the two time spans inherent in the detective story. However, direct references to detective stories or writers are visibly absent from Robbe-Grillet's earlier novels and occur only minimally in his later works.[36] Borges' fiction, on the one hand, abounds in allusions to authors – some of which are to detective writers. In his use of _intertextualité_, Borges has the unique confounding habit of mingling references to both real and fictitious authors. On the other hand, Nabokov's novels make fewer intertextual references, but these are almost all constrained to some aspect of the detective genre. A similarity exists between Borges and Nabokov in their presentation of critical discussions on the detective story. Borges' essay-fictions "El acercamiento a Almotásim," "Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain" and "Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto" depict a critic reviewing or interlocutors conversing about a detective story or stories to study the narrative strategies or clashing interpretations. Likewise, in The Real Life of Sebastian Knight, we find the narrator's critical examination of his brother's detective stories. It shall be discovered that these intertextual references and statements are not gratuitous but, in fact, reveal some of the authors' fundamental aesthetic tenets.[37]

Early in his story "La muerte y la brújula," Borges firmly entrenches his detective Lönnrot under the auspices of his illustrious forbear — C. Auguste Dupin. In his intellectual task of cipherment, Lönnrot is indeed comparable to the reasoner and 'disentangler' par excellence: "Lönnrot se creía un puro razonador, un Auguste Dupin, pero algo de aventurero había en él y hasta de tahur."[38] Borges considers Dupin as the prototype of the highly talented mind whose progeny includes such exalted thinkers as Sherlock Holmes and Valéry's Monsieur Teste.[39]

Apart from this repeated reference to the first genuine detective, most of Borges' allusions consistently advert to the authors, not the characters, of a detective story. Borges specifically alludes to Edgar Allan Poe as the original author who began the literary tradition of giving a paramount role to the intellectual powers of a superior mind. In "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote," Borges underlines that Poe, because of his conception of a reasoner like Dupin, instituted himself as the first in a long lineage of writers principally enthralled with the functioning of the mind or the procedures of logic and reasoning. "Poe, que engendró a Baudelaire, que engendró a Mallarmé, que engendró a Valéry, que engendró a Edmond Teste," and we could add, who engendered Jorge Luis Borges.[40] In another story, Poe is designated by Borges as the writer of mysteries and puzzles that are certainly obscure but not unduly difficult or inexplicable; Poe is credited with the invention of some of the most esteemed and still flourishing conventions of the detective puzzle, for instance, the idea of the locked-room mystery or of the overlooked ultra-obvious solution based on "the very simplicity of the thing":

> - No multipliques los misterios - le [Unwin] dijo -. Éstos deben ser simples. Recuerda la carta robada de Poe, recuerda el cuarto cerrado de Zangwill.
>
> - O complejos - replicó Dunraven -. Recuerda el universo.[41]

Borges continued the practice of book reviewing in his essay-fictions "El acercamiento a Almotásim" and "Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain." These two reviews are complementary since they both deal with imagined detective stories written by one Mir Bahadur Ali and one Herbert Quain. There are different published versions of the much acclaimed story The Approach to Al-Mu'tasim and the reviewer has on his desk the most recent version containing the preface by Dorothy Sayers. All critics have agreed that the story is a mélange of a detective story and a visionary or mystical tale. This idea that a detective story could be combined with another literary form calls back to mind Chesterton's art of fusing the rational and the fantastical or magical: "el mecanismo policial de la obra, y su undercurrent místico. Esa hidridación puede movernos a imaginar algún parecido con Chesterton; ya comprobaremos que no hay tal cosa."[42] The substance of the book review is to describe the plot of this detective story which features the advancement of a student hero towards the goal of his search. This journey and search can be condensed into a schematic poetic outline: "La insaciable busca de un alma a través de los delicados reflejos que ésta ha dejado en otras" or reduced to a mathematical explanation: "El tecnicismo matemático es aplicable: la cargada novela de Bahadur es una progresión ascendente, cuyo término final es el presentido "hombre que se llama Almotásim."[43] The journey ends where it began and the book reviewer concludes with the formulation of conjectures about possibilities implied in the idea of a cyclical search.

The book reviewer of the "Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain" discusses not only one novel but the entire oeuvre of Herbert Quain. Whereas in The Approach to Al-Mu'tasim the action of the search was progressive or forward moving, Herbert Quain's books are all structured on the principle of regression or a backward search from the final action or effect to the primary cause. This regression is limpidly exemplified by a detective's investigation procedure. The book reviewer notes how Herbert Quain's first novel The God of the Labyrinth was compared to a story by Agatha Christie or one by Gertrude Stein. Having lost his copy of this detective story, the book reviewer can only summarize the overall plan. The ending of the story is baffling since the reader is asked to re-examine the narrative in order to find the implied solution; the reader is explicitly requested to become the detective:

> Ya aclarado el enigma, hay un párrafo largo y retrospectivo que contiene esta frase: Todos creyeron que el encuentro de los dos jugadores de ajedrez había sido casual. Esa frase deja entender que la solución es errónea. El lector, inquieto, revisa los capítulos pertinentes y descubre otra solución, que es la verdadera. El lector de ese libro singular es más perspicaz que el detective.[44]

Herbert Quain's succeeding three novels are radical experiments with the notion of regression. One story, as the apt title suggests, April, March, is a "novela regresiva, ramificada" where the action could be continued indefinitely or cyclically; The Secret Mirror eliminates all causal links in the regressive action; and in the last novel Statements, Quain composes eight arguments which appear in need of improvement or revision, hence the reader must become an active participant or detective as in the first novel.

The story "Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto" offers two opposing interpretations of the building of a labyrinth and, after long disputations in Cornwall and London, the friends agree that no definite solution can be formulated. As one of Borges' more extensive parodies of the detective story, "Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto" exposes to ridicule many conventions of the genre. For example, the convention of the obligatory solution to a mystery is scrutinized by the two enthusiasts of detective fiction and discovered to be too patently transparent and mechanical. Compared to the heightened suspense of the detective story proper, the dénouement often signifies a drastic levelling off of the excitement and a gradual tapering to a tidy and temperate ending, or to quote the words of John Fowles, a resolution means a "drop" or a "flop."[45] The reader will often find that the requisite ending fails to climax the story satisfactorily — it is too incongruous and too contrived: "Dunraven, versado en obras policiales, pensó que la solución del misterio siempre es inferior al misterio. El misterio participa de lo sobrenatural y aun de lo divino; la solución, del juego de manos."[46]

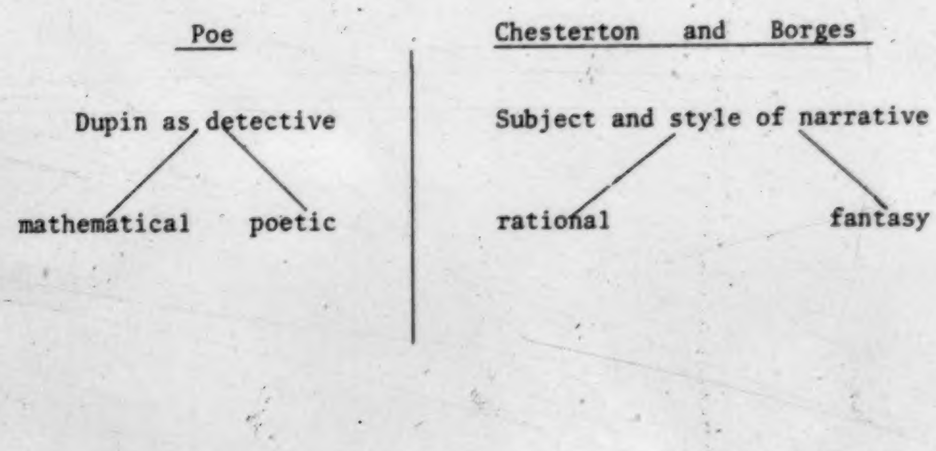
The two interlocutors, Dunraven and Unwin, who deliberate on the motives for the construction of a refuge or trap and on the ensuing crime, are interesting in themselves. One — Unwin is a mathematician by profession, the other — Dunraven, a poet by choice. The story of the mystery of Abenjacán and Zaid is narrated by the poet. The mathematician, upon reflection, is confident that the image of the spider's web is the clue to the unravelling of the enigma. Hence, the mathematician who interprets Dunraven's story shows affinities towards the poetical. The bringing together of a mathematician and a poet to discuss a detective story exteriorizes an idea precious to Borges. The blending of the rational and emotional faculties in the intellectual process is a concept that issues from Poe's theory of the ideal reasoner.

Poe, in a type of prelude to "The Purloined Letter," propounded a theory of reason first by assessing the merit of the mathematical and analytical spirit and finding it inadequate for original thought. In his understanding, the poetic element is the indispensable ingredient that acts as the catalyst for innovative thinking. Poe instructs us further about his theory by applying it to his characters: the mind of the minister [the criminal] is both mathematical and poetical since he devised an ingenious plan to hide the letter: "I know him well; he is both. As poet and mathematician, he would reason well; as mere mathematician, he could not have reasoned at all." [47] In order for Dupin to resolve the conundrum and find the letter, he had to be of a superior intellectual disposition than the minister, that is, he had to be more poetical. The prefect has only an efficient mathematical mind and thus could not hope to uncover a clever ruse. Dupin's poetic inclination permits him his victory.

We could regard Poe's theory of reason as having been refined and enlarged upon by authors as Chesterton and Borges. Chesterton, as we have just beheld, is fondly admired by Borges because of his skilful uniting of the rational with the fantastical or magical. These two poles contain in esse Poe's notions of the mathematical and the poetical. Borges himself, we shall soon learn, combines in his works the supra-rational and the supra-fantastic. Also, Borges has often spoken of his intense desire to compose stories that are not only precise exercises in metaphysics or logic but are especially visual, emotional, passionate — in other words, poetic. Describing his intentions when writing "La biblioteca de Babel," Borges clearly discerns the two levels of this story (and also of his other ficciones) and underlines that the poetical dimension is the cachet:

> Dans ce conte, et je l'espère dans tous mes contes, il y a une partie intellectuelle et une autre partie — plus importante je pense — le sentiment de la solitude, de l'angoisse, de l'inutilité, du caractère mystérieux de l'univers, du temps, ... de moi-même. Je crois que dans tous mes contes on trouve ces deux éléments. Ce sont un peu des jeux. Ces jeux ne sont pas arbitraires. ... Je me suis amusé. C'était un jeu. Un peu comme le cas d'un joueur d'échecs. Il y a un problème. Il y a un amusement. Et une joie.
>
> Il y a d'une part, le plan intellectuel, le plan mathématique si vous voulez. L'autre plan est le plan poétique. L'idée de restituer d'une façon ou d'une autre des expériences ou des états de conscience.[48]

Hence, the basic premise for all these writers, as we observe, stems from the polarity between reason and emotion. Poe's thought finds its echo in Chesterton's and Borges' substantial linking of the rational and the fantastic, and in their style which is both cerebral and lyrical. The following diagram places this threefold relationship in perspective:



A great many direct and indirect or recondite allusions, usually jocular in tone, are intermittently interposed in most of Nabokov's novels. We shall attend primarily to the most frequent and original types of references — namely those which consider the detective hero Sherlock Holmes and those which examine *cum grano salis* the conventions of the genre. A reader can find references to Sherlock Holmes, this "hawk-nosed, lanky, rather likable private detective" in the most unlikely nooks and recesses of the novels.[49] To be sure, allusions to Sherlock Holmes are contextual and often support the main plot-line or can be associated with one central character in the novel. Let us mention in ascending order, from the brief notation to the longer expression, this important leitmotif that transpires in one form or other in Nabokov's novels. For instance, the narrator who jockeyed Professor Timofey Pnin out of his position always carries an old Sherlock Holmes volume with him: "an omnibus edition of Sherlock Holmes which had pursued me for years supported a bedside lamp...."[50] In *Pale Fire*, the first canto of Shade's poem conjures up the world of Sherlock Holmes: "Was he in *Sherlock Holmes*, the fellow whose / Tracks pointed back when he reversed his shoes?"[51] Doyle's memorable hero prefigures Shade's own detective-like investigation as he tries to reconstitute the "tangled web" of his life. In another search, V in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* identifies with ~~Sherlock~~ Holmes when he cunningly interviews Madame Lecerf, the lady he presumes is his brother's secret Russian love: "... "a handsome dark woman?" I suggested, using an old Sherlock Holmes stratagem."[52] While Hermann is busy plotting his perfect suicide in *Despair*, his wife Lydia and her lover Ardalion are imagining tactics to enmesh the unsuspecting Hermann. In accordance with her role as an abecedarian strategist, Lydia is an ardent reader of detective stories, especially Sherlock Holmes: "she was, comfortably drinking coffee with me and recalling some Sherlock Holmes adventure." [53]

The motif of Sherlock Holmes is most prevalent in the narrative The Defense. As a young boy, Luzhin, the chess prodigy, relishes the tales of Sherlock Holmes:

> But it was not a thirst for distant peregrinations that forced him [Luzhin] to follow on the heels of Phileas Fogg, nor was it a boyish inclination for mysterious adventures that drew him to that house on Baker Street, where the lanky detective with the hawk profile, having given himself an injection of cocaine, would dreamily play the violin. Only much later did he clarify in his own mind what it was that had thrilled him so about these two books; it was that exact and relentlessly unfolding pattern: ... and Sherlock endowing logic with the glamour of a daydream, Sherlock composing a monograph on the ash of all known sorts of cigars and with this ash as with a talisman progressing through a crystal labyrinth of possible deductions to the one radiant conclusion. The conjuror whom his parents engaged to perform on Christmas day somehow managed to blend in himself briefly both Fogg and Holmes. [54]

After his whirlwind public life as chess-master, Luzhin drops out of the game and during his convalescence, he requests volumes of Sherlock Holmes. The popular adventure narratives and detective stories which Luzhin covets are frowned upon by his entourage: ""I've just scoured through all the book stores," sighed the daughter, "he absolutely had to have Jules Verne and Sherlock Holmes. And it turns out he's never read Tolstoy." "Naturally, he's a peasant," muttered her mother." [55] Luzhin identifies completely with the persona of Sherlock Holmes when he finally attempts to analyze the pattern of his destiny: "He began to think intensely at nights, the way Sherlock had been wont to do over cigar ash —...." [56]

It is very appropriate to see how Luzhin, the chess-genius, empathizes whole-heartedly with the masterly detective hero. From the preceding references to Sherlock Holmes, it can be perceived that usually one hero in a novel is closely connected to the detective as he struggles to clarify the mystery of his life or to out-manoeuvre his opponent.

While Nabokov frequently inserts allusions to his favorite detective hero, he seldom adverts to detective writers. Apart from his many references to Poe in Lolita (bearing on Poe's personal love life which parallels Humbert's), the novel Despair is one of the rare instances where Nabokov mentions detective writers. Overwhelmed with pride at his own genial plan, Hermann addresses Doyle and Dostoevsky to point out and to condemn them for their limitations. His comments about these two particular authors and their detective or detective-like writings support the underlying irony and parody of the novel. Hermann envisages how Arthur Conan Doyle could have surpassed himself by terminating his Sherlock Holmes saga with the story of a crime performed by the narrator-friend — Dr. Watson himself:

> Oh, Conan Doyle! How marvelously you could have crowned your creation when your two heroes began boring you! What an opportunity, what a subject you missed! For you could have written one last tale concluding the whole Sherlock Holmes epic; one last episode beautifully setting off the rest: the murderer in that tale should have turned out to be not the one-legged bookkeeper, not the Chinaman Ching and not the woman in crimson, but the very chronicler of the crime stories, Dr. Watson himself — Watson, who, so to speak, knew what was Whatson. A staggering surprise for the reader. [57]

When this idea is considered within the context of Despair, the reader discovers that the narrative stance used in this novel is precisely the one advanced by Hermann. Nabokov has perceived how a transformation of the detective story can be achieved not only through plot variation but also through the dramatic and surprise shift in narrative perspective. In fact, the novels Despair and Lolita adopt this narrative viewpoint where the narrator-criminal releases his confession of his plan and murderous deed.

In addition, Despair is the one novel where Nabokov fiercely refutes and ridicules the author of Crime and Punishment. The hero Hermann downgrades Dostoevsky's mystical flights by viewing him as an ignominious writer of thrillers. He fears that his own style may be too close and "smack ...of thumb-screw conversations in those stage taverns where Dostoevski is at home; a little more of it and we should hear that sibilant whisper of false humility, ... the mystical trimming dear to that famous writer of Russian thrillers."[58] And whereas Luzhin compared himself to the renowned detective Sherlock Holmes, Hermann, understandably enough, calls himself a Raskolnikov figure and even resorts to the diminutive "rascal" to have a good laugh at the expense of his double: "In spite of a grotesque resemblance to Rascalnikov ... ."[59] Hermann's attitude towards these authors, Doyle and Dostoevsky, is one of great superiority over his predecessors: he finds fault with their plots and viewpoints since they compare very unfavorably with his own ability to imagine a 'perfect' strategy:

> But what are they — Doyle, Dostoevsky, Leblanc, Wallace-what are all the great novelists who wrote of nimble criminals, what are all the great criminals who never read the nimble novelists — what are they in comparison with me? Blundering fools![60]

Nabokov has undercut many important conventions of the detective genre in Despair and Lolita in the same off-hand and candid style as observed above in his references to detective writers. Two of the more interesting allusions concern the unique procedures involved in reading a detective story. Hermann's wife, Lydia, is an avid reader of detective stories and on one occasion, in order to avoid rushing to the conclusion, she rips her book in half and hides the last section. She then expends her time trying to remember where she had deposited the denouement: "she forgot the place and was a long, long time searching the house for the criminal she herself had concealed,... "[61] This delightful anecdote, in fact, depicts the precise situation of a detective in his search for the criminal. However, a more immediate implication is deduced by Hermann who establishes an analogy between the criminal in that 'penny dreadful' and himself — Lydia is expected to keep his pseudo-suicide secret.

In another pleasant yarn, Humbert recalls how, in his boyhood, he had read a French detective story where the clues were embossed in italics. Humbert's own inquiry into the disappearance of Lolita, in contrast, is hampered by false and recondite clues purposely left by his opponents. In the midst of his unaided search, Humbert cannot disentangle any of the indices or clues. Only at the close of the investigation will Humbert find himself in a position to look back or look from above and see how these clues merge to form a decipherable pattern. Thus, the French detective tale is a _mise en abyme_ of _Lolita_.

> I now warn the reader not to mock me and my mental daze. It is easy for him and me to decipher _now_ a past destiny; but a destiny in the making is, believe me, not one of those honest mystery stories where all you have to do is keep an eye on the clues. In my youth I once read a French detective tale where the clues were actually in italics; but that is not McFate's way — even if one does learn to recognize certain obscure indications.[62]

This movement or pattern of discovery which can be grasped only retrospectively reflects the central structure of the detective story where the detective proceeds somewhat blindly in his investigation and, only at the end, discovers the solution. And, like the French detective story which proffered clues in italics, the author of Lolita surreptitiously inserts clever hints that can help but often trip the placid reader.

Sebastian Knight, like Borges' Herbert Quain, wrote many novels which experimented with properties of the detective story. The biographer V in The Real Life of Sebastian Knight devotes his tenth chapter to a critical analysis of Sebastian's two very popular upheavalings of the detective genre. His first novel, The Prismatic Bezel, parodied the customary devices of the detective tale, one of which is the recurrent typical setting: "a rollicking parody of the setting of a detective tale; ... the fashionable trick of grouping a medley of people in a limited space (a hotel, an island, a street)."[63] From the conventions parodied, we can infer that Sebastian intended to ridicule stories like Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express. The sequel, Success, did not parody detective story techniques but rather the important plot structure. In this novel, an author's game with causalities is made to convey the impression that Fate determined the lines of action: "the whole book indeed being but a glorious gamble on causalities or, if you prefer, the probing of the aetiological secret of aleatory occurences."[64] (This undermining of the detective plot is very pertinent when we consider Nabokov's own plots in novels such as Lolita and Pale Fire). The biographer is careful to point out that Sebastian's undercutting of the detective story was "not a parody of the Sherlock Holmes vogue but a parody of the modern reaction from it."[65] Sebastian believed that since the conventions of the detective tale were too overly and thoughtlessly used "the adopted method of a detective story, became a bloated and malodorous corpse."[66] By means of parody, the author wished to infuse new freshness and vitality to these overworked and hackneyed conventions:

> he used parody as a kind of springboard for leaping into the highest region of serious emotion. ... Based cunningly on a parody of certain tricks of the literary trade, The Prismatic Bezel soars skyward. With something akin to fanatical hate Sebastian Knight was ever hunting out the things which had once been fresh and bright but which were now worn to a thread, dead things among living ones; dead things shamming life, painted and repainted, continuing to be accepted by lazy minds serenely unaware of the fraud.[67]

V's excellent definition of parody is probably the most important single statement on the topic found in Nabokov's novels and other writings. The aesthetic view of rejuvenating and transforming an exhausted form concurs with Nabokov's own ideals. Most critics of Nabokov have, whenever discussing the element of parody in his novels, quoted the above crucial definition but have overlooked the actual context in which it occurs — that is, Sebastian's novels as parodies of the detective story. There must be a special significance to the fact that Nabokov placed this incisive definition of his own aesthetics in a description of a parody of a detective story.

The detective story is the one redundant literary form most persistently parodied in Nabokov's novels. Even though the detective story is singled out in the definition of parody, one should not discount all the innumerable other formulaic genres or traditions that are the target of Nabokov's ire. Nabokov seems compelled to attack whatever has become a stock idea or device complacently accepted. He parodies not only popular genres like thrillers, westerns, pornography, but also forms as confessional novels, melodramas, biographies, scholarly exegeses, traditions like the Doppelgänger, ideas like psychoanalysis .... It can be adduced that since parody is so omnipresent in Nabokov, it has become almost a convention in its own right in his novels. [68] The mocking spirit of Nabokov does not regard with disdain the notion of parodying himself. In Pnin, for instance, the author cunningly and cuttingly pictures his own world of academe before the fame and fortune of Lolita and even scoffs at our own task at hand: "And still the College creaked on. Hard-working graduates ... still wrote dissertations on Dostoevski.... Word plastics like 'conflict' and 'pattern' were still in vogue ." [69] A reader of Nabokov soon learns to view literature without solemnity. Mockery and 'mimicry' are at the center of Nabokov's concept of parody. For Nabokov, parody is not a sledge-hammer blow but rather an elegant graceful nudge in the direction of the imitated convention or tradition. The author's concept of parody, "that last resort of wit," can best be understood when contrasted with satire, or in his own words: "Satire is a lesson, parody is a game" ... "an essentially light-hearted, delicate, mockingbird game." [70]

Literature as Artifice: The 'pattern in the game'

Nabokov's expression "pattern in the game" (Pale Fire) underlines precisely the importance of 'plot' or 'structure' in a literary work. A particular plot pattern is the chief characteristic of the detective story; it is the property that determines a story's affiliation to the detective genre. All action and events in a detective story are arranged to conform not to exterior reality but to comply with the exigencies of the pre-ordained order of a fabricated plot. This invented and very distinct plot structure, as our next chapter will elucidate, necessarily exhibits a crime or other type of mystery and its expected clarification. The detective story can accommodate limitless supple variations, but these must not in any way alter the rudiments of the plot structure otherwise the detective element would be eradicated. However radically the standard rules are transformed, there must be a mystery situated at one point which organizes the new work — that is, as Borges succinctly indicated, "los crímenes y el misterio [tenia que figurar, siquiera de manera indirecta] en una parodia de la novela policial." [71] Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet find unanimity in looking towards the detective story plot pattern and essaying new experimentations with this form.

Without its exceedingly rigorous and defined plot, the detective genre would not be as attractive a form to our authors who esteem the artificial nature of a work of art. It is the intricate plot endemic to the detective story that is responsible for the artificiality of the detective genre. Because of its fixed, formulaic design, the detective story cannot pretend to be anything but an artificial construct: the author invents a puzzle and works to keep this enigma ambiguous and open until he ultimately deciphers his own problem; hence, the work is answerable to its own inner laws and not to outside reality. In truth, the detective story is famous for flaunting its contrived, artificial nature, the flaunting of its own fictionality. Thus, the detective story, as a calculated invention with a determining plot structure, is ideally suited to modern or contemporary fiction and its interest in meta-literature or self-reflective art. This type of literature remains within the 'reality' of its own contrived world and explores the many possibilities contained in the realm of 'art'. The fact that the detective story does not shun its artificial nature but rather proclaims it accords with the vision of literature upheld by Borges, Nabokov, and Robbe-Grillet. Our authors subscribe to the idea that a literary work is only a contrived piece and has no ulterior motive: it is not constructed for the edification of the public or as a vehicle for social and political comment. For them, as for the detective writers, literature is an invention, an artifice, or to use Nabokov's word, a 'game.' Our authors reject the notion of a utilitarian purpose in literature. Each is very outspoken in his explanation that a literary work is an artifact and only an artifact:

> No me atrevo a afirmar que cuentos son sencillos; no hay en la tierra una sola página, una sola palabra, que lo sea, ya que todas postulan el universo, cuyo más notorio atributo es la complejidad. Sólo quiero aclarar que no soy, ni he sido jamás, lo que antes se llamaba un fabulista o un predicador de parábolas y ahora un escritor comprometido. No aspiro a ser Esopo. Mis cuentos, como los de las *Mil y Una Noches*, quieren distraer y conmover y no persuadir. (Borges)

> The mysteries of mimicry had a special attraction for me. ... When a butterfly has to look like a leaf, ... I discovered in nature the nonutilitarian delights that I sought in art. Both were a form of magic, both were a game of intricate enchantment and deception.
>
> I have no social purpose, no moral message. I've no general ideas to exploit but I like composing riddles and I like finding elegant solutions to those riddles that I have composed myself. (Nabokov)

> Au lieu d'être de nature politique, l'engagement c'est, pour l'écrivain, la pleine conscience des problèmes actuels de son propre langage, la conviction de leur extrême importance, la volonté de les résoudre de l'intérieur.
>
> ... l'oeuvre n'est pas un témoignage sur une réalité extérieure, mais elle est à elle-même sa propre réalité. (Robbe-Grillet) 72

From their essays or fictional writings, we can see how each of our authors has drawn attention to the plot, pattern or structure governing his short stories or novels. This structure or pattern of artifice retains and explodes the basic properties of the detective plot.

All of our authors have clearly evaluated their reasons for having recourse to the detective story, especially to its definitive and predictive plot pattern. Let us take cognizance of their avowed purpose in employing the plot of a popular genre to shape and highlight their own stories or novels. Borges and Robbe-Grillet regard the plot or structure of the detective story as a means to control and order their narratives; Nabokov points to the conventions that have become too mechanized or tarnished and have lost their significance.

Borges describes himself as an "hacedor" or maker of artifices and contrived pieces. Although concise and equivocal in his stories, Borges has been especially articulate in his comments which pertain to the singular importance of plot to give form to a work. The detective story plot permits him to plant a rigid structure at the heart or center of his short stories.

It is the ability of plots to impose a structure or form upon a work of literature that interests Borges. This emphasis on the significant role of plots in the narrative is evinced in Borges' prologue to Bioy Casares' novel La invención de Morel. Psychological fiction and its amorphous mass which attempts to reflect reality is contrasted with the very definite patterns and conventions of adventure stories which are only concerned with their own world of art and artifice.

> La novela característica, "psicológica", propende a ser informe. ..: la novela "psicológica" quiere ser también novela "realista": prefiere que olvidemos su carácter de artificio verbal y hace de toda vana precisión (o de toda lánguida vaguedad) un nuevo rasgo verosímil. Hay páginas, hay capítulos de Marcel Proust que son inaceptables como invenciones ... La novela de aventuras, ... , no se propone como una transcripción de la realidad: es un objeto artificial que no sufre ninguna parte injustificada. El temor de incurrir en la mera variedad sucesiva

> del *Asno de oro*, del *Quijote* o de los siete viajes de Simbad, le impone un riguroso argumento.[73]

Borges advocates a return to specified plots and contrivances; he believes that art should not try to imitate life but be exactly what it is — a work of art with its own laws and its own causal infrastructures. While Borges condemns the loose unstructured texts that prevail in modern literature, he nevertheless proposes a few recent novels as models that have excelled in their invention of precise and original plots. The authors that Borges recommends for their plots include some of his favorite texts such as Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, Franz Kafka's *Der Prozess*, Jules Verne's *Voyage au centre de la Terre*. In addition, he signals out the detective genre itself with its imperious requirement of a well-defined plot: "Las ficciones de índole policial — otro género típico de este siglo que no puede inventar argumentos — refieren hechos misteriosos que luego justifica e ilustra un hecho razonable."[74]

To demarcate this opposition between realistic fiction and contrived fiction, Borges explains how the integration of events through causality differs in the construction of both types of plots. In realistic fiction, the events are linked in a more or less chronological order, however in contrived fiction, the actions are arranged in an intricate fashion and, hence, do not reflect the exterior world. Borges terms the artificial causality of a contrived plot as a "magical causality," that is, the work of art is not accountable to exterior reality but only to itself. This work of art has a very organized and predetermined plan where all the the sequences of cause and effect are ultimately branched together: "en una novela, que debe ser un juego preciso de vigilancias, ecos y afinidades. Todo episodio, en un cuidadoso relato, es de proyección ulterior."[75] In his very crucial essay on the concept of causality in plots, "El arte narrativo y la magia," Borges clearly designates what is the difference between realistic and contrived modes of fiction: "He distinguido dos procesos causales: el natural, que es el resultado incesante de incontrolables e infinitas operaciones; el mágico, donde profetizan los pormenores, lúcido y limitado."[76] In order to illustrate how he envisages an author's use of "magic causality," Borges takes some of his examples from Chesterton's detective stories. He points out that in a Chesterton story, the incidents are interlinked in their own inner fashion since the author invented his own fantasies and then answered them.

With respect to his own ficciones, Borges has repeatedly affirmed the primordial function of plot. Not only has Borges stated that his stories depend on a strict plot structure and 'magical causality,' but he has also reiterated the fact that all plots in his stories are very similar. In his prefaces, he will candidly excuse himself for making such homogeneous structures: "El curioso lector advertirá ciertas afinidades intimas. Unos pocos argumentos me han hostigado a lo largo del tiempo; soy decididamente monótono."[77] How can one best describe this basic plot structure that unites Borges' stories? Since his plot outlines are very defined and very recurrent, one can easily notice how they involve an investigation or a search which attempts to uncover some enigmatic object or occurrence of whatever nature — extending from learning about a person's identity to decoding the secret name of God. These structures embrace the detective story plot which polarizes itself around a mystery and the investigation. His structures or 'argumentos' further divide themselves according to two categories: there are some stories that are static presentations of an intellectual problem, and others that are more dramatic and posit journeys of discovery usually terminating with a crime. In the dramatic narratives of crime, Borges condenses the pattern to its bare but essential points. In his words, this paring entails "la reducción de la vida entera de un hombre a dos o tres escenas." [78] There is, in both types of stories, a heightening or intensification of the detective plot because of the nature of the intellectual problem or of the condensation of the drama. Therefore, in all these stories, the suspense is enhanced and the investigative plot enters the realm of the metaphysical and the fantastic, or as the metaphysicians of Tlön opined, "la metafísica es una rama de la literatura fantástica." [79]

Just as Borges' key words are 'argumentos' and 'artificios,' no two terms could better describe Nabokov's concept of composition and art than 'pattern' and 'game.' He considers the writer as a chess composer or as a theater director and the work itself as a riddle, a chess-move, a play, in short, a game. Nabokov has been very explicit in expounding this vision of the artist. For instance, we could apply to the author himself the portrait of the adept manipulator Rex in *Laughter in the Dark*: "The stage manager whom [Nabokov] had in view was an elusive, double, triple, self-reflecting magic Proteus of a phantom, the shadow of many-colored glass balls flying in a curve, the ghost of a juggler on a shimmering curtain. ... " [80] Unlike James Joyce who sought to be above and beyond his creation, Nabokov knows that the hand of the author can never be totally absent from the work. Thus, rather than pretence, why not, he asks, make the reader fully aware of the manipulations? A game of chess or a stage performance implies the presence of a master or director who is guiding and moving the action and the pawns or puppets. Since Nabokov holds this view of himself as controller or manager, he chooses not to hide behind the scenes but to expose and even flaunt his role as manipulator. One efficacious way of demonstrating this role is to display the mechanics of artifice involved in the creation of his tightly-woven plots.

Poe once counselled writers to always begin with the denouement in mind and work backwards blending the cause and effect relation of the plot to correspond to a pre-established plan and conclusion.[81] An author like Nabokov applies this well-founded instruction to the letter. He regulates all the events of the story in order that they coincide or even synchronize one with the other and organizes it so that the links of his narrative are visible. The actions of his two central opponents, in all his novels, are aligned in counterpoint. This interest in complex causalities and coincidences of the plot led Nabokov eventually to his consummate work of "contrapuntal pyrotechnics."[82] The murderer and the victim in Pale Fire are presented separately in different spaces but simultaneously until they meet and the plot lines set forth merge at the end with the botched crime in the garden. Because Kinbote's tale and commentaries are reported retrospectively, he can easily synchronize the action of the approaching killer with the progress of Shade's actual composition of the poem:

> His departure for Western Europe, with a sordid purpose in his heart and a loaded gun in his pocket, took place on the very day that an innocent poet in an innocent land was beginning Canto Two of Pale Fire. We shall accompany Gradus in constant thought, as he makes his way from distant dim Zembla to green Appalachia, through the entire length of the poem, following the road of its rhythm ...[83]

To speak of coincidence and synchronization in this manner shows us the veritable construction of the plot or l'envers du texte. Usually a reader looks at the story from the point of view of heroes embroiled in an action and left at the mercy of Fate, Destiny or Chance and not as characters who,as cardboard puppets, have been positioned to coalesce harmoniously with the other characters and the action demanded of the plan. Whereas we may speak of the fate of Julien Sorel in Stendhal's Le Rouge et le noir or the fate of Tess in Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles, in Nabokov's novels, fate implies coincidence and control of the hero by the hand of the chess-master or stage director. Hence, with respect to the action of a Gradus or a Shade, the reader watches with keen pleasure not the characters but how the author constructed his plot pattern or how, in Nabokov's words, "the pattern of the thing precedes the thing."[84]

Nabokov resorts to the synchronized action of two central opponents and to a format of investigation or a pattern of discovery as his major structural method. This 'pattern in the game' is beheld, in retrospect, by the narrator-author and should also be glimpsed at by the reader. The persona of Nabokov as chess composer and theater director is adopted by a first person narrator-writer like Hermann, Humbert or Kinbote. These narrator-authors retell their confession or the story after the action has unfolded and they are therefore in a position to contemplate the complete 'correlated pattern.' Hence, the narrator hero of a Nabokovian novel deciphers, from the mottle of his or another's life, a linking thread. Such a moment of decipherment is well exemplified in Pale Fire when the authorial voice in Shade's poem arrives at the joyous discovery of an underlying unity in the disorder of his existence. The hero's quest for self-knowledge ends with his apprehension of a 'pattern' that can trace a 'web of sense':

> I mused as I drove homeward: take the hint,
> And stop investigating my abyss?
> But all at once it dawned on me that this
> Was the real point, the contrapuntal theme;
> ...
> Not flimsy nonsense, but a web of sense.
> Yes! It sufficed that I in life could find
> Some kind of link-and-bobolink, some kind
> Of correlated pattern in the game,
> Plexed artistry, and something of the same
> Pleasure in it as they who played it found. [85]

The author hopes that his reader, his "little Nabokov," shall also be able to apprehend and enjoy, after a first or second reading, the presiding pattern in his novels. [86] Thus, Nabokov often composes his stories with the detective plot as guideline and usually from a retrospective viewpoint. (See chapter four.)

For Robbe-Grillet, as for Borges and Nabokov, the plot or pattern is the indispensable factor in the creation of a work of literature. Robbe-Grillet's idea about structure as the *sine qua non* of a Nouveau Roman or new film may be found in many essays and interviews. Whenever an author imagines a precise structure, this form, according to Robbe-Grillet, not only supports the narrative but the form itself *is* the fabricated piece. There is no differentiation between the form or the content, or as the author explicates — the structure is the meaning:

> For me, every new work, every novel and every film is precisely the creation of a new structure. What interests me most in a narrative, be it a novel or a film, is the narrative structure. That is my work as an author and that is the content of the work. The content is its form. It is the form that carries meaning. [87]

Traditional criticism about the question of plots in a narrative fails to account for or to explicate Robbe-Grillet's original structures or forms. The plot in a story denotes the fact that an action is progressing or at least that an action is happening. Any good definition of plot, like the following one by Scholes, does not apply at all to the novels of Robbe-Grillet:

> All plots depend on tension and resolution. ... The reader of a narrative can expect to finish his reading having achieved a state of equilibrium — something approaching calm of mind, all passion spent. Insofar as the reader is left with this feeling by any narrative, that narrative can be said to have a plot.[88]

The relative immobility of the action in Robbe-Grillet's novels has caused critics to argue that the author dispenses with a plot. Robbe-Grillet himself, however, denies this criticism and avers that plots, albeit of a different nature and function, do exist in his writings:

> il ne faut pas assimiler la recherche de nouvelles structures du récit à une tentative de suppression pure et simple de tout événement, de toute passion, de toute aventure. ... je ferai remarquer que _Les Gommes_ ou _Le Voyeur_ comportent l'un comme l'autre une trame, une "action," des plus facilement discernables ....S'ils ont au début semblé désamorcés à certains lecteurs, n'est-ce pas simplement parce que le mouvement de l'écriture y est plus important que celui des passions et des crimes?[89]

Robbe-Grillet (like most Nouveau Roman writers), organizes his narratives around a few chosen objects and actions and then, throughout the text, arranges, rearranges and disarranges these sequences by incremental repetition with light variations. There is no precise ongoing movement but only the organization and disorganization of scenes — 'la structuration et la déstructuration de scènes.' A novel constructed on this principle of repetition with deviations never moves forward. The definite structural units which are repeated incessantly present the reader with a difficulty of comprehension. The action does not progress but rather only rotates (confronted with a Nouveau Roman, I always think of the insidious refrain of Ravel's Boléro). These incessant repetitions and alternations of fragmentary structures appear in succession in the narrative. The links that bind two structures together are very tenuous and slight — between the structures, there is a space or gap of information that is missing. Every organization of a form or structure in Robbe-Grillet deals with the perpetual re-examination of a scene and, in consequence, an essentially banal scene becomes very absorbing for the reader. The thrust of every Robbe-Grillet novel is investigative: the hero attempts, through an intellectual search or adventure, to penetrate the obsessive event or action that is imbued with mystery.

The arrangement of fragmentary structures, in this manner, is due to a new type of causality. To demonstrate how his linking of structural units diverge from the usual, chronological order, Robbe-Grillet calls this causality the 'new order.' Each constantly repeated episode constitutes an effort to uncover or decode the meaning of the objects or incidents at hand. Every returning structural sequence adds, changes, or removes partial or ancillary information and consequently, every trial or attempt is a slippage. The reader labors with this ponderous text in expectation of a discovery. However, the revelation of a secret is forever postponed until finally the frustrated reader realizes that the process of repetition or the redundancy itself was the message. Instead of pursuing this interesting explication of the 'new order' of causality, let us conclude with Robbe-Grillet's own insightful comments using La Jalousie to illustrate how his new organization of 'structures' creates the artificial work of art.

> Causality and chronology are really the same thing in a traditional narrative. The succession of facts, the narrative concatenation, as is said today, is based entirely on a system of causalities: what follows phenomenon A is a phenomenon B, the consequence of the first; thus, the chain of events in the novel. The very order of traditional narration will be causality and temporality as causality. Now if one takes a Nouveau Roman, or New Novel — let us choose a text like *La Jalousie* — what happens is entirely different. Instead of having to deal with a series of scenes which are connected by causal links, one has the impression that the same scene is constantly repeating itself, but with variations; that is, scene A is not followed by scene B but by scene A', a possible variation of scene A. Nevertheless, these scenes follow each other in an order which should be that of temporality and causality. ...
> But *this new order has the great advantage of calling attention to its own artificiality* ... instead of hiding behind the appearance of something natural ... *It is the artifice itself which appears on the scene in the novel*. ...
> The concept of truth in fact disappears in this new operation, for that order, as I've said, is a created order. It is not a reproduction of an order which already exists[50] but an order created by the narrative itself.

From the above analysis, we can gather that our three authors resemble each other in their vision of the importance of plot structure. Our authors espouse the view that a contrived work should rely on its own unique causal system and not seek to reflect outside reality. Indeed, each author, in his own personal style, confirms the idea that the artifice should be openly displayed. And Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet consider the detective structure or pattern as the malleable form that can impress a rigorous shape to their narratives.

* * *

Interrelations Among Authors

Thus far we have shown how Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet, through their critical commentaries or intertextual references, have expressed their intimate knowledge about the detective genre: their fondness for some detective writers or detective heroes, their appreciation and undercutting of certain integral properties of the genre, and their construction of plots that reflect the detective story's precise and determining structure. We shall now look briefly at the relations and interrelations that exist among our authors themselves and how Borges and Nabokov are at the forefront of the renewed interest in and experimentation with the popular genre.

Borges' stories seem so neoteric and so congruent with contemporary literary currents that we often tend to forget that most of his fictions were written early in the century. In truth, Borges' first representative stories like "Hombre de la esquina rosada" (1933) and "El acercamiento a Almotásim" (1935) were constructed in the early 1930's and these stories contain in latent form the author's passion for detective structures and elements. Although Borges wrote most of his better known stories in the 1940's, as for example "La muerte y la brújula" (1942), he did not obtain a wide readership in his own country or abroad, except for such cosmopolitan figures as Valery Larbaud or Drieu la Rochelle, until his stories were translated into French in the early 1950's by Verdevoye and Ibarra and Caillois.[91] This introduction of Borges outside the borders of Argentina later led to such translations as those in America by Irby, Yates and others.[92] Both Caillois and Yates, it is interesting to observe, became or were specialists and critics of the detective genre. Borges owes his international reputation to these important translations as he himself acknowledges: "Néstor Ibarra and Roger Caillois, who in the early 1950's daringly translated me into French, were my first benefactors. ... until I appeared in French I was practically invisible — not only abroad but at home in Buenos Aires."[93] His reception in France occurred in the middle of the century at the time of the emergence of the Nouveau Roman school. As an acclaimed author of 'partial magic,' Borges' aesthetic views of literature as a self-conscious artifice coincided perfectly with the aims set forth especially by Robbe-Grillet and Butor. Consequently, Borges has been appraised as a precursor of the Nouveau Roman by authors like Claude Ollier, Jean Ricardou or Hubert Aquin. In America, a country which he loves to visit and deliver lectures at universities, Borges is heralded by modern writers as the master of the "literature of exhaustion," to use John Barth's famous phrase (the other masters being Beckett and Nabokov).[94] The imprint of the Borgesian style is glaringly evident in the currently fashionable novels of John Barth, John Hawkes or Thomas Pynchon. And not only in America but also in Spanish-America, Borges has been an inspirational and imitative force to younger authors bursting with creativity as Cortázar, Puig, Cabrera Infante and García Márquez.[95]

Like Borges who began his literary career before the mid-century, Nabokov started as a Russian émigré writer in Berlin also in the late 1920's and early 1930's. His first stories, King, Queen, Knave (1928), The Eye (1930) and Despair (1936), announce forthrightly his inclination for the detective story pattern. Most of Nabokov's Russian novels were translated only decades later, for instance The Eye and King,Queen, Knave were first translated in collaboration with his son Dmitri in

1965 and 1968 respectively, and other stories are still in the process of being translated. In fact, it is with Nabokov's first English novel The Real Life of Sebastian Knight (1941) and, of course, especially Lolita (1955) that the author became internationally recognized in the world of letters. However, Nabokov had the good fortune of becoming known by a 'happy few' in the 1930's because of a French or even of his own English translation of Despair.[96] This novel was not understood by most critics or readers when it appeared since it was very different from the prevailing literary movements. For example, in 1939, Sartre wrote a scathing review of Despair in which he condemned the meta-fictional dimension and ridiculed the intentions and the parodic spirit of the author: "il se place délibérément sur le plan de la réflexion; il n'écrit jamais sans se voir écrire..."[97] This early boutade is quite ironic since Sartre was later to write a resounding preface to Nathalie Sarraute's Portrait d'un inconnu by calling attention specifically to the parody of the detective story elements:

> Un des traits les plus singuliers de notre époque littéraire c'est l'apparition, çà et là, d'oeuvres vivaces et toutes négatives qu'on pourrait nommer des anti-romans. Je rangerai dans cette catégorie les oeuvres de Nabokov .... le roman est en train de réfléchir sur lui-même. Tel est le livre de Nathalie Sarraute: un anti-roman qui se lit comme un roman policier. C'est d'ailleurs une parodie de romans "de quête" et elle y a introduit une sorte de détective amateur et passionné qui se fascine sur un couple banal .... Il abandonnera son enquête pour cause de métamorphose: comme si le policier d'Agatha Christie, sur le point de découvrir le coupable, se muait tout à coup en criminel.[98]

It is incontestable that, notwithstanding Sartre's damaging comments, the Nouveau Roman writers, including Sarraute, felt "the influence of the French edition of Despair."[99] Robbe-Grillet himself reveals, in a

1973 interview, that he is reading the new 1965 version of Despair. In addition, it would even be permissible to surmise that Borges could have read a copy of either the English or French translation of this unique and unprecedented novel in the 1940's. [100]

Although Nabokov has been considered, along with Borges, as an exceptional influence on modern literary movements like the Nouveau Roman, he has no great respect for non-independent minds. This is why he dismisses the followers of the Nouveau Roman school — but he has great admiration for its initiator Robbe-Grillet. For a comparative study, it may be wise to mention that Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet have met, discussed each others writings and expressed mutual esteem. Both have spoken about one particular memorable dinner meeting where Catherine Robbe-Grillet dressed as Lolita. Nabokov has also avowed a passing knowledge of Borges' short stories, however he insists that he began to read him only late in life. [101] When confronted with the direct question (a question which could have been precisely our own): "You have said that Alain Robbe-Grillet and Jorge Luis Borges are among your favorite contemporary writers. Do you find them to be at all similar?...," Nabokov answered by adverting to the image of the labyrinth in the works of Borges and Robbe-Grillet:

> His [Robbe-Grillet] fiction is magnificently poetical and original, and the shifts of levels, the interpenetration of successive impressions and so forth belong of course to psychology — psychology at its best. Borges is also a man of infinite talent, but his miniature labyrinths and the roomy ones of Robbe-Grillet are quite differently built, and the lighting is not the same.
>
> I do have a few favorites [authors] — for example, Robbe-Grillet and Borges. How freely and gratefully one breathes in their marvelous labyrinths! I love their lucidity of thought, the purity and poetry, the mirage in the mirror. [102]

Robbe-Grillet is situated at a privileged cross-road — Faulkner, Borges and especially Nabokov are elders from whom he inherited innovative styles and techniques. Robbe-Grillet clearly paid homage to Nabokov in a recent interview with David Hayman about American literature. He praised Nabokov's novels and confirmed that Nabokov and he are pursuing the same aesthetic goals:

> What's odd is that in literature I feel closer to the novelists of the last generation, to Faulkner .... There are two American writers who fascinate me because I find them close to what I'm doing: Burroughs and above all Nabokov.
>
> Q. Yes, but he isn't American.
>
> A. He writes in American! He is as American as Beckett is French! Look here, I'm rereading his Despair, which appeared in French in '33 [sic] but has just now been reprinted. A book like Pale Fire comes very close to my books.
>
> Q. Is it a matter of style, of voice?
>
> A. Of écriture, a concept of literary creation completely different from the pseudo-realism of Saul Bellow and Mailer.[103]

The preceding overview has delineated a few factual rapports amongst our authors. Our readers may have already gathered that Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet possess an uncommon love of popular forms; one of these forms being films. Indeed, they share a great interest in motion pictures. We know, of course, of Robbe-Grillet's close attachment to films, but what we may ignore is that Borges and Nabokov are also connected with the cinema. With the advent of cinema early in the twentieth century, the literary arts embarked on a new area of interchange. The tradition of this intimate bond has often been traced, yet, for example, a critic like Bluestone in Novels into Film, fails to demonstrate how the popular detective genre is probably the primary artistic form transferable to the screen.[104] Most successful detective stories or spy stories are extraordinarily well-adaptable to the film medium because of their precise and rigid plots. In truth, the majority of popular and bestselling films in the history of the cinema have been detective tales and thrillers: we may think for instance of The Maltese Falcon, The Big Sleep, The Spy Who Came In From the Cold .... We may note that many illustrious actors became identified with their roles as detectives — Humphrey Bogart or Robert Mitchum, to name the most handsome and memorable. Movies, especially detective and thriller films, like the detective story proper, became a form of popular culture which, as Claude Edmonde-Magny foresaw in the 1940's, would affect mainstream literature.[105] Indubitably, there is a very close alliance between the detective tale as a work of literature and its cinematographic adaptation. An excellent illustration would obviously be the inimitable film adaptations of Alfred Hitchcock. Hitchcock, often inspired by techniques or ideas of literary writers (among whom figure prominently Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet), deftly adapted outstanding stories of mystery as John Buchan's The Thirty-Nine Steps (1935), or others like Suspicion (1941) based on an Anthony Berkeley novel, Strangers on a Train (1951) on Patricia Highsmith, Vertigo (1958) on Boileau-Narcejac's Sueurs froides. It would be very enlightening to examine how the motion picture adaptations reflect but also diverge from the original literary works.

Each of our authors has had personal experiences in writing screenplays and adaptations of their stories or novels for the motion pictures. Hence, we could think of our authors as direct contributors to the detective film: Borges and his film versions of "Hombre de la esquina rosada" and "Emma Zunz," Nabokov and his script of Lolita, Robbe-Grillet and his ciné-romans or films as L'Immortelle (1963) and Trans-Europ-Express (1966). Some directors have chosen to make movies based on their stories, for instance, R.W. Fassbinder's production of Despair in 1978, the Italian director Bernardo Bertolucci's Strategia del Ragno (1969-1970) derived from "Tema del traidor y del héroe," or the Argentine director Hugo Santiago's film Les Autres (1973-1974) which relies on a good plot conceived by Borges and written in collaboration with Casares. This latter film is described by its director as one which "inscribe dentro de su texto el proceso de su producción" and also displays the qualities of a typically borgesian plot: "Trama perfectamente clásica, ... con una originalidad: que la 'explicación final' del misterioso entramado, y que lo aclara por completo, es también ella fantástica. ..."[106]

Borges not only specialized in writing book reviews of detective stories but he was also a critic of films. Most of his screen reviews, originally published in Sur, have been collected by Cozarinsky in Borges y el cine — it would be indispensable for the researcher to collect a parallel volume of 'Borges y la novela policial.'[107] As we peruse the cinema reviews, we discover, as expected, that Borges channeled most of his criticism around the films of von Sternberg, Chaplin or Hitchcock. Sternberg, like Chesterton, assisted Borges in the development of his poetics of the detective story or thriller and the fantastic. Such films as Underworld (1927), The Docks of New York (1928) or The Drag Net (1928) were impressive for their exposition of an hallucinatory reality and their highly poetic technique of visual concision.[108] Sternberg's gangster movies with their disquieting irreality or "móviles pesadillas" fascinated the Argentine author.[109]

The Stanley Kubrick film version of *Lolita* (1962), based on the author's film script, received *mutatis mutandis* the approbation of Nabokov. When consulted about the film version, Nabokov imperatively demanded that the murder of Quilty in his dilapidated house be presented as the introductory scene of the film. This insistence on having the final scene as prelude indicates very clearly the primacy of the plot pattern of the antagonism between Humbert and Quilty over the series of sensational love scenes. Thus, the film begins with the grotesque confrontation between Humbert (James Mason) and his comic *Doppelgänger* Quilty (Peter Sellers). [110]Since the novel *Lolita* is told in retrospect, this 'final' scene sets the tone for the film and helps the viewer follow the plot line of the hunt or chase and places the love intrigue in a subordinate position. Not only has *Lolita* been adapted to the film medium by directors like Kubrick, theatrical versions have also been produced. Since the world of the stage and the theatre is a pervasive metaphor or reference in all of Nabokov's writings, it is not surprising that many allusions are made to the cinema, as for instance, the inner duplication of the film *King*, *Queen*, *Knave* or the film *Argus* in *King*, *Queen*, *Knave* or *Laughter in the Dark* (originally entitled *Kamera Obscura*) or the fact that many characters are either directly or indirectly associated with the cinema or the theatre as actors, directors, film critics .... An excellent image of the film director concludes of course the novel *Despair* where Hermann directs his own "getaway" after his distraught writing of "*Despair*":

> "Frenchmen! This is a rehearsal. Hold those policemen. A famous film actor will presently come running out of this house. He is an arch-criminal but he must escape. You are asked to prevent them from grabbing him. This is part of

> the plot. ... Hold those policemen, ... Les preneurs de vues, my technicians and armed advisers are already among you. Attention! I want a clean getaway. That's all. Thank you. I'm coming out now."[111]

The relationship of Robbe-Grillet to the cinema is more than obvious. Beginning with Alain Resnais in the enigmatic and persuasive L'Année dernière à Marienbad (1961), Robbe-Grillet has reached degrees of exceeding complexity and parody in his films as L'Homme qui ment (1968) and L'Eden et après (1971). The aura of unreality in Robbe-Grillet's Marienbad was compared by reviewers to Casares' La invención de Morel.[112] Most of Robbe-Grillet's films, but especially L'Immortelle and Trans-Europ-Express have as underlying structure the quête or enquête of the detective plot. The film critic André Gardies explains, for example, how the action of Trans-Europ-Express "se rapproche d'un récit policier relativement traditionnel, mais ... intégrée dans un vaste ensemble, elle [l'histoire] ne fonctionne plus, tout en servant de fil conducteur apparent.[113] In this film, there is an interesting intertextual or intercinematic reference when the hero Elias (Jean-Louis Trintignant) stands in front of a large poster of James Bond. Many of the techniques in Robbe-Grillet's disturbing and vertiginous films correspond to techniques employed in his novels.[114] One outstanding technique found in both forms of artistic constructions is that of omission or the withholding of information through holes or gaps between scenes. For instance, Elias in the involuted detective film is apprehended by the police, later beaten up by gangs, yet arrives by train at his destination alive and happy. Since no links are provided between the separate scenes, the viewer is required to imagine or infer the necessary enchaînement. This film technique of transition may be described in a vocabulary immediately applicable to the novel: "c'est un élément d'écriture; c'est en somme un des éléments formels les plus importants du récit. Car c'est cet ensemble de ruptures entre les plans qui constituera l'architecture du discours." [115] Robbe-Grillet the film director like Robbe-Grillet the author transmits an expressly unfinished work, a work of découpage.

Aside from Robbe-Grillet's films which feature aborted detective stories, many other modern screen-writers and directors are experimenting with the detective genre. Consider films like François Truffaut's Shoot the Piano Player (1960), Claude Chabrol's Le Scandal (1967) or Violette Nozière (1978), Hitchcock's Frenzy (1972) and Brian de Palma's Sisters (1973) and their treatment of crime where the mystery remains inscrutable. These movies mirror the literary transformations of our authors. There are even many perceptible points of exchange between cinematic and novelistic 'anti-detective stories' or 'metaphysical detective stories.' [116] This Zeitgeist brings into evidence parodies of the detective genre in both the film and the narrative and would merit further comparative critical attention.

If the detective story has permeated through so much of modern literature and cinema, we may conclude that it is largely thanks to precursors as Borges, Nabokov and even Robbe-Grillet. The modern authors who turn to the use of the detective story, be they Handke in Germany, Sanguineti in Italy, Fowles in England, Pynchon in America, Cortázar in Latin America or Hubert Aquin in Canada, do so primarily because the popular genre permits variations and transformations of its rigorous plot and conventions. All these authors, at one time, experienced the dilemma of exploding yet retaining affiliations with the well-defined genre. Hubert Aquin, in the first pages of Prochain épisode, is spokesman for every author when he discloses his ambivalent position vis-à-vis the detective story — where he has one foot poised in the precarious heights of experimentation and the other rooted in the terra firma of tradition:

> Au fond, un seul problème me préoccupe vraiment, c'est le suivant: de quelle façon dois-je m'y prendre pour écrire un roman d'espionnage? Cela se complique du fait que je rêve de faire original dans un genre qui comporte un grand nombre de règles et de lois non-écrites. ...
> J'éprouve une grande sécurité, aussi bien l'avouer, à me pelotonner mollement dans le creuset d'un genre littéraire aussi bien défini.[117]

* * *

CHAPTER TWO

" ... unravelling a web which you (the author)
have woven for the express purpose of
unravelling ... "

E. A. Poe *

THE DETECTIVE STORY PROTOTEXT: AN APPROACH

The Prototext: A Definition

"he aquí su plan ... Hay un indescifrable asesinato en las páginas iniciales, una lenta discusión en las intermedias, una solución en las últimas" — these words are used by the book reviewer to define the plot of the first novel of Herbert Quain.[1] This incisive reviewer distinguishes three categories within the detective tale: the crime, the discussion and the solution. A similar outline is perceived by Luzhin, the master chess player in The Defense. He has loved the tales of Arthur Conan Doyle since his boyhood and wonders, twenty years later, why they have always impressed him so forcefully: "Only much later did he clarify in his own mind what it was that had thrilled him so about these two books, it was that exact and relentlessly unfolding pattern." Above everything else, he cherishes the image of Sherlock as enigma solver and appreciates how the hero moves dextrously from deductions to a solution: " ... and Sherlock endowing logic with the glamour of a daydream, ... progressing through a crystal labyrinth of possible deductions to the one radiant conclusion."[2] The author of Les Gommes, likewise, in a preface to his novel, underlines the three indispensable units of the plot structure:

> Il s'agit d'un événement précis, concret, essentiel: la mort d'un homme. C'est un événement à caractère policier, c'est-à-dire qu'il y a un assassin, un détective, une victime. En un sens, leurs rôles sont même respectés: l'assassin tire sur la victime, le détective résout la question, la victime meurt.[3]

All of the above reflections on the detective story revolve around the 'plan,' the 'pattern,' the 'événement à caractère policier,' that is, the tripartite division found in the narrative. They specify the three salient components of all detective stories and indicate that there is a progression within the text from a given crime or mystery to an inquiry into the problem which leads to an ultimate elucidation and re-establishment of order.

The narrative of the detective story serves to clarify the opaqueness of a seemingly irresolvable problem in order to arrive at a verifiable truth or explanation. Thus, the essential properties of the detective story are disposed in a text according to the central pattern of the mystery, investigation and resolution. All general definitions of the genre include this ideal schema of a logical progression.

> ... il y a roman policier quand l'objet de la fiction est de passer du mystérieux à l'intelligible, quand le point de départ est une énigme singulière et le développement la recherche d'une solution qui doit être conforme aux connaissances de l'époque et ne jamais faire appel au surnaturel.[4]

These three basic forms of mystery, investigation and resolution are known as the conventions of the genre. Without a distinct mystery or crime postulated at one point in the story and resolved at another, the detective story would lack its inherent design. It would not qualify as a story pertaining to a defined genre, possibly one of the most rigidly defined genres in all of literature.

Because of its determining conventions, the detective story demands a tightly-woven plot based on its aesthetics of problem and solution. Like the book reviewer or like Luzhin, the reader discerns as he advances from the intrusion of a mysterious event to the formulation of a plausible solution that the plot of the story can be reduced to its skeletal segments. The reader's decipherment of a logical diagram encompassing all the plot entanglements is one of the greatest delights of the genre. Establishing an outline of the detective plot helps the reader gain a fuller understanding of the mechanics of the detective genre. We can conceive of the diagram as the argument or the pattern of the story. In a very revealing anecdote, Marjorie Nicolson contrasts two types of readers: the non-initiate who tramples through the ghastly bloodshed and the initiate who boldly looks for the pattern or the diagram behind all the suspense:

> As every connoisseur knows, the charm of the pure detective story lies in its utter unreality. This is a point the untrained reader does not comprehend. He wonders at our callousness, at our evident lack of sensitiveness; he cannot understand how we can wade eagerly through streams of blood, how we can pursue our man even to the gallows with the detachment of Dr. Thorndyke himself. He is tortured by visions of bloodstained rugs; he shudders at the smoking revolver, the knife still sticking in the wound. "I dreamed all night of people lying in pools of blood," declared my unsympathetic friend at breakfast .... And she will never believe me quite a human being again because I assured her that after five murders I can put out the light and sleep like a child until morning, the reason being that where she has seen, with horrible distinctness, an old man lying in a pool of his own blood, I had seen — a diagram.[5]

A genre comes into being when many texts exhibit a similar pattern or structure and display common properties. The conventions particular to a genre create certain expectations for the reader, or as Northrop Frye often repeated, 'a genre is predictable.'[6] With respect to the detective story, the reader can expect the exposition of a crime and predict the type of dénouement intrinsic to the genre. Whether a text complies with or deviates to some extent from the conventions, there is an ideal construct of this genre which the reader has in mind. This model comprises within itself all the essential elements of the genre. We define this model as the original structure or prototext. If we would abstract from a story, as Marjorie Nicolson did, the skeletal outline, we would arrive at what we consider to be the prototext. This prototext is the constant that can be found in all detective stories. In point of fact, all important elements of the detective story are incorporated in this model.

All the texts belonging to a genre conform more or less to an abstract model of what a detective story should be. When a reader knows the detective genre well, he can compare the story he is reading against the ideal structural archetype.[7] He would be in a position to notice the extent of similarity and difference between the story and the ideal model; between the text and the prototext. Deviations are very perceptible when an author has seen how some conventions have become too redundant. He will use parody to a lesser or greater degree to expose the too familiar conventions. This notion of an ideal model with which to contrast other texts that use elements of the genre would be, in our opinion, a very expedient procedure in comparative literature: the prototext is the gauge by which other texts in the genre can be assessed.

Our objective, in this chapter, is to present a theoretical discussion elucidating the constituent elements of the prototext. Our inquiry will focus on such major topics as the plot structure, the story of the crime and the story of the investigation, the preferred narrative techniques — especially the Watson-observer type, and the modes of retardation or the hermeneutic code. A more extensive knowledge of the prototext will greatly enhance our appreciation of the variations that are made on the constant or the standard. We will complete this chapter with an analysis of the concept of parody. Mention will also be made of how some characteristics of the detective genre, as examined in the prototext, are related to other adjacent traditions as the fantastic and how hybrid forms as thrillers and spy fictions developed from the pure tale of ratiocination.

Detective Story Structure

The three structural components of the prototext which we have just defined are found in the classic detective story and its hybrid forms. Its essential parts are usually distributed in the logical and traditional order: beginning with the presentation of a mystery, proceeding with the time of inquiry and search, concluding with a plausible and satisfying solution. This plot progresses in a very orderly and cohesive fashion. Every detail, every incident, every sequence of the plot is contrived to bring about the desired effect. Most events pertain directly to the formulation and explanation of the problem at hand. The information given serves to retard and later explain this problem, and as such, love intrigues or long philosophical debates are infrequent since this superfluous material would distract the reader from the single and complete 'wholeness' of the work. This unity of plot or 'artistic wholeness' means, as Aristotle noted, that "... the various incidents must be so constructed that, if any part is displaced or deleted, the whole plot is disturbed and dislocated." [8]

To achieve this rigid plot structure, the detective story avoids at all costs detailed descriptions, characters that are not integral to the plot and commentaries outside the sphere of the problem. Borges is one author who defends the rigor and order of the classical pattern of the detective story. He opposes the diffuseness and randomness of modern novels to the classical brevity and precision of the detective tale: "virtudes clásicas de la organización y premeditación." [9] He advocates, as Aristotle did, that a plot should have a distinct overture and closure: "In a world of shapeless psychological writing, I found in this particular form the classic virtues of a beginning, a middle, and an end — of something planned and executed." [10]

In a detective story, the mystery which had been posited in the opening pages is skilfully controlled until its disclosure at the end. The plot is written, as Poe indicated, with the last sentence in mind. The resolution must be perceptible and yet remain elusive all along the development of the intricate narrative. The detective story is a strangely woven text — it tries to reveal and to obfuscate at the same time. The solution should be glimpsed at now and then but always deferred, that is, it should be present everywhere in the story but never apparent. We could illustrate this idea of a hidden solution enclosed within the text by referring to André Gide's image of the palimpseste which is a parchment manuscript where one can uncover or decode a new text under the original writing. In fact, the solution should emerge as a surprise, and then, upon consideration, appear very logical and plausible. The reader, in the end, admires the intellectual powers of the detective and yet feels that he too, had he been a famous detective, could have deciphered the puzzle. This is the disposition that Lord Peter Wimsey in Dorothy Sayers' Five Red Herrings alludes to in his remark: "Anybody could have come to the same solution as I did. Why didn't anybody?"[11]

We have seen how all the devices of the plot manage to look towards the resolution. Implied in this idea of the unity in plot and the subtle ending is Edgar Allan Poe's influential notion that a tale should be constructed in the light of a singular effect. Before writing a narrative, an author asks himself — what type of effect do I wish to convey in this work? Once the desired end is chosen, the writer works backwards, organizing and re-arranging his material to cause this result. Poe elaborates on this idea of the requisite effect in his review of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales and in his "Philosophy of Composition": "... having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents — he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect."[12] A story that is composed according to this poetics demonstrates the masterly hand of its creator. In such a contrived story, every element has been planned and disposed in view of a pre-ordained pattern which will arouse the intented emotion. In fact, the plot is orchestrated to arrive smoothly at the dénouement. In Poe's own detective tales, the reader discerns that the effect the writer wished to produce was one of astonishment in front of the extraordinary mental capacities of a C. Auguste Dupin.

In the detective genre, the achievement of a closely-knit plot directed towards the resolution is often criticized. Some theorists feel that the plot form is too exact and orderly — in fact bordering on the mechanical or the ludic. One such criticism of the tightness of the form is vividly expressed in a conversation between the police chief and the detective writer in Dürrenmatt's Das Versprechen. The detective writer, who has just given a lecture on "The Art of Writing Detective Stories," is questioned by the police inspector about the convention of the plot structure. In his view, the plot is too carefully constructed and becomes excessively artificial.

> Nein, ich ärgere mich vielmehr über die Handlung in euren Romanen. Hier wird der Schwindel zu toll und zu unverschämt. Ihr baut eure Handlungen logisch auf; wie bei einem Schachspiel geht es zu, hier der Verbrecher, hier das Opfer, hier der Mitwisser, hier der Nutznießer; es genügt, daß der Detektiv die Regeln kennt und die Partie wiederholt, und schon hat er den Verbrecher gestellt, der Gerechtigkeit zum Siege verholfen.[13]

In answer to this critique that the detective story is too methodical and that the plot unfolds in too tense and artificial a manner, Borges affirms that such a defined and organized pattern creates extreme pleasure for the reader who is fond of logic and reason. He does not see why a reader should not appreciate the precision of a plot that is designed with the strictest sense of effect, equipoise and wholeness and reminds one of classical tragedy.[14]

> Dans une époque où tous les arts — littérature incluse — marquent une préférence pour le désordre, l'inachevé, le bâclé, par un réel paradoxe le roman policier maintient la tradition classique faite d'ordre et de raison. La trame du roman policier n'est pas improvisée au petit bonheur; elle est conçue avec une stricte logique, à tel point que le dernier chapitre — celui qui apporte le dénouement, ici la solution — est amené avec la même rigueur que le dernier acte de la tragédie classique. Et beaucoup de lecteurs du roman policier trouvent leur plus grand plaisir à prévoir, dès les prémisses connues, quelle sera la solution et suivent alors les méandres de l'intrigue avec un plaisir de qualité intellectuelle.[15]

In order to dispose of a plot having a distinct beginning, middle and end — should the puzzle or enigma be concentrated within a few pages or should it be more fully extended? Should the detective story be taut as "The Purloined Letter" or "The Red-Headed League" or less taut as *The Hound of the Baskervilles* or E.C. Bentley's *Trent's Last Case*? There are very valid arguments for both points of view. The contemporary detective story seems to have resolved this dilemma by opting for a middle ground; most stories are *nouvelles* or novelettes as the works of Agatha Christie or Ross Macdonald.

The vindication of the short story form is very clearly enounced, as we have seen, in Poe's poetics (He was theorist for both detective story and short story forms). Since the effect, as Poe believed, is the ultimate aim of the story, the text should be brief and the plot should consist of only the bare essential action. Hence the most appropriate length to create and maintain the total effect and arrive at a surprise ending is the short story. The short story's main quality is that it concentrates on the final point or as Eikhenbaum's metaphor of the target explains: "Tout dans la nouvelle comme dans l'anecdote tend vers la conclusion. La nouvelle doit s'élancer avec impétuosité, tel un projectile jeté d'un avion pour frapper de sa pointe et avec toutes ses forces l'objectif visé." [16]

Another argument in favor of the short story form is proposed by Chesterton. He considers the detective tale better suited to the short form because of its dismissal of characterization. The action of the plot takes complete precedence over the elaboration of characters. With this clear idea of the pre-eminence of plot, Chesterton, like

Poe and Borges, is very Aristotelian in thought. If we were to transpose the word detective fiction for tragedy in Aristotle's phrase about characterization, we would then obtain Chesterton's veritable viewpoint: "Without action there could be no [detective story], whereas a [detective story] without characterization is possible." [17] In his essay "On the Detective Novel," Chesterton writes:

> the *roman policier* should be on the model of the short story rather than the novel. ... The chief difficulty is that the detective story is, after all, a drama of masks and not of faces. It depends on men's false characters rather than their real characters. [18]

For a defense of the alternate view — that the longer story or novel is a better vehicle for the detective plot, the major argument put forward concerns the idea of duration. A longer story gives the author more time to weave and unweave a consummate plot. The theorists for the detective novel suggest that a writer has a better chance to 'play fair' with the reader if his plot is not only schematized but fully developed. They believe that sufficient time should be allowed to make all points of the mystery more familiar to the reader. A prolonged plot should contribute to a sense of heightened suspense. Grossvogel, as exponent of this view, explains that the question of the length of the detective story is really about "a matter of time": "the short story ... is too close to its own articulation — a puzzle without enough of the fleshing out that is necessary to effect the illusion of a mystery." [19]

The detective story, whether short novelette or longer novel, must enfold in, as previously discussed, the three distinguishable segments necessary for the detective pattern. The genre must contain, in short, a mystery and a solution to the mystery. This is the principle behind the structure of these stories. The mystery, whether a crime, a puzzle or other phenomena of a problematic nature, as has been pointed out, is placed in the text for the sole purpose of being resolved. Hence, the end completes the beginning. The intervening time between the mystery and the solution is devoted to detection in order to shed light and finally comprehend the mystery. Of course, in a longer story, the focus is on this process of uncovering the facts behind the problem. In a detective story text, the author's task is paradoxical: he must plan a problem and he must then successfully solve it. The author must pay attention to what type and how much information is given in order to tease and taunt the reader and thereby keep the puzzle ambiguous until the final pages.

Thus far, we have considered the detective story structure in its traditional pattern where a mystery occurs in the initial pages followed by the investigation or discussion and culminating with the solution. This is the normal sequential order of the 'classic' detective story. In practice, however, there can be displacements in this order. For example, a few writers, especially modern writers, as in the case of Boileau-Narcejac, place the crime not at the outset but consign it to the end and so reverse the usual structural sequence. Rearrangements among the three segments of the structure are possible. These rearrangements entail, for the writer, a new vision of his story. Consequently, a different order calls for the displacement of other elements of the detective story, particularly the point of view and the change in emphasis from the investigation after the crime to the machinations that precede the crime or the construing of the problem.

In the body of our thesis, the term genre relates to a literary form with characteristic and predictable elements. Our prototext or model delineates the fundamental properties of the detective form or genre. On the other hand, the terms detective story, detective short story, detective novel are synonymous with terms like detective narrative or detective fiction — all these expressions identify the literary text.

Criminal and Detective: A Conflict of Opponents

Having established the fundamental structure of detective stories, we shall now turn to the characters in this drama who embody these two poles of the structure – the problem maker and the problem solver. The role of the criminal and the detective as master-mind of the scenario and decoder of a puzzle leads us, in the second section, to make a very interesting analogy. We shall see how the function of the creator of the enigma and the interpreter of signs and clues parallels the world of the writer and his relationship with the reader.

If we pass in review all the dramatis personae in a detective story, we can easily identify them according to their respective roles: the murderer, the detective, the suspects and that much neglected species — the victim. We could also find within the ranks of this dramatis personae a few other characters, namely, the admiring but slightly obtuse companion and sometime narrator and the average dull-witted director of the police force. These last two characters serve as foils to the detective; they exist to enhance his superior ability. Evidently, there are no characters which are extraneous to the demands of the plot. The emphasis on plot is so primordial in a detective story that characters have only a very subservient or functional role. They do not exist as full-fledged entities. At one end, the criminal is responsible for the precipitation of the action. In the case of a murder, it is the criminal who imagines an intricate plan and carries out the momentous deed. He is the one who weaves the web which the other man (or woman) will unravel. At the other end, there is the detective who would be unemployed were it not for the presence of the criminal. In essence, he must retrace the steps and unearth the strategy of the criminal. His existence is very dependent on and even subservient to the careful and original plotting of the "trickster."[20] However, the limelight is focused on the detective since he is engaged in the prolonged adventure and holds a more public role in the story. These two characters — criminal and detective — merge with the plot and act out their appointed roles.

Characters in detective fiction are, in the terminology of E. M. Forster, extremely "flat characters" imagined with "a single idea or quality": to murder or to detect.[21] The intellectual bent of detectives such as Holmes or Father Brown, to illustrate, can be characterized in a nutshell: the reasoner, the intuitive. Once type-cast as man of reason or intuition, their "personality" remains constant from story to story, from case to case. These characters do not have a life of their own: we do not know their past, their outside interests, their thoughts about life, death, sex, war, culture... . Sherlock Holmes, for example, lives only for the time of the investigation. When he does not have a case to solve, we find him in his apartment at 221B Baker Street playing the violin or taking opium, and being genuinely bored.

Characters of detective fiction usually do not possess any identity aside from their role or function within the text. The murderer and the detective are the central opponents who conform in every respect to their assigned roles. Since they are introduced in the tale only to permit the unfolding of the mystery, they are seen, not as unique individuals but as puppets, automatons or pawns on a chessboard. When Chesterton, as we recall, referred to the detective story, he spoke of it as "a drama of masks and not of faces."[22] Similarly, Roger Caillois underlines this inherent inhumanity displayed by the heroes: "Le roman policier tend à éliminer toute vie, toute humanité — à mettre en scène des automates, des chiffres ou des pièces d'échecs."[23] These marionettes who follow their prescribed roles appear as though manipulated from above: often the reader sees the shadow of the hand of the manipulator as he guides his pawns from point A to point B. To illustrate this idea of the characters as puppets or pawns, we need only call to mind the manikin figures in De Chirico's paintings or the knife-supported waning figures in Dali's art. It is not fortuitous that the opponents are described, as Caillois notes, as "des pièces d'échecs." The metaphor of the game of chess is often used by writers of detective stories to define the plot and players of their tale. The idea of the chess game indicates very well the underlying ludic aspect of the genre.

Because the characters are players in a game, it is understandable, therefore, that a psychological analysis of the heroes is inappropriate and contradicts the very fabric of a detective story. Indeed, how can one analyze a puppet? To attempt a psychological probing of the characters is a self-defeating undertaking and does not at all respond to the raison d'être of the mystery tale. Raymond Chandler, in his essay "The Simple Art of Murder," condemns Dorothy Sayers' well-known interest in the psychological dimension of her characters. He reminds the reader that you cannot have both a good plot and good characterization within the framework of the detective story:

> If it [the detective story] started out to be about real people ... they must very soon do unreal things in order to form the artificial pattern required by the plot. When they did unreal things, they ceased to be real themselves. They became puppets and cardboard lovers and papier-mâché villains and detectives of exquisite and impossible gentility.[24]

Since the murderer and the detective are types and exist in relation to their functional role, it follows that their task can be assumed by another. A character, for example, though not technically a detective by trade, can perform an investigation in the manner of a Dupin or Holmes. As decipherer of a problem, his position or action would correspond to that of a great detective. For instance, Revel in *L'Emploi du temps* and the Professor in *Degrés* are engaged in a search to determine the circumstances of a crime. They are not professional detectives, but as Butor makes clear: "Dans *Degrés* le professeur fait le travail d'un détective mais il n'a pas le costume du détective."[25] We define this character who adopts the role of a detective in a story as a *sub-detective* — the prefix *sub* indicating that he is substituting or acting in place of the detective. The drama of mystery and resolution is maintained, only the mask of the detective is transferred to another character.

With respect to the question of characterization, an interesting contradiction should be noted. Why does a reader get the impression that he knows Sherlock or Father Brown intimately? If the characters in a detective story are like puppets, why should the reader feel so attached to the detective figure. Although it is true that the hero is uni-dimensional; it is also true that, since he reappears in a succession of stories, he becomes well-known. From the time of Poe, it has been a tradition for a detective author to feature the same hero, be it Hercule Poirot, Philip Marlowe or Lew Archer, in most of his stories. A reader who is well-acquainted with a detective like Sherlock Holmes comes to believe that this character is so familiar as to be life-like. In fact, as one aficionado proclaimed: "It would be no exaggeration to state that 221B Baker Street is to the foreign visitor as familiar an address as 10 Downing Street."[26]

It is significant that the drama of a detective story is played by two central opponents. To be sure, the properties of the genre demand the presence of two heroes placed in opposition. Before the advent of a crime, the relationship is between the murderer and the victim, and after a crime, the relationship falls on the murderer and the detective. In most detective stories, the latter relationship is more developed. This complicity and rivalry between the antagonist and the protagonist has a few important consequences. First, because they are paired in an interlocking battle, there is the idea of the domination of one hero over the other through the use of cunning tactics and manoeuvres. The analysis of the struggle for power, as defined by Michel Foucault, applies very well to the network of strategies inherent in the opposition between the problem maker and the problem solver.[27] Secondly, in order to solve the mystery, the investigator must always have his opponent in mind: he tries to understand all the actions and motives of his rival. The companion of Dupin, for example, deduces that this procedure is one where the detective must actually place himself in the mind of the murderer and become one with him: "... this mode of reasoning ... [is] an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent." [28]

We need only extend this idea of identification a little further and recognize that in many detective stories the pursuer considers the man he pursues to be his other self. Thus the detective can turn out, in the end, to be the criminal himself. We can very easily envisage how, had circumstances been different, Sherlock Holmes could have been Professor Moriarty. This bond of kinship and intimacy between the two rivals raises up the idea of the external double where one character sees himself as the other. The detective story pattern has also been used by authors to exhibit the concept of the internal double, that is, where there is this fusion of opposites in a character himself. To illustrate this self who creates an *alter ego* within the context of the fantastic tale, we may think of the famous *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* or the jeweller Cardillac in "Mademoiselle de Scudéry." Ever since Poe himself and his detective tale "Thou Art the Man," the motif of the external and/or internal double has become an intrinsic feature of the genre. [29] Although critics have rarely mentioned this feature, writers are very conscious of its possibilities. In fact, modern authors now see the metamorphosis of the opponents as a rule and often enjoy parodying it. For example, in Borges' tale "Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto," Dunraven, who is a specialist of detective stories, mocks this conventionalized component of the genre: " - Acepto - dijo - que mi Abenjacán sea Zaid. Tales metamorfosis, me dirás, son clásicos artificios del género, son verdaderas *convenciones* cuya observación exige el lector." [30]

In another order of thought, let us now briefly discuss how this relation between the detective and the criminal can be interpreted in terms of the reading and writing process. An analogy can be made between the role of the detective and the reader and between the criminal and the writer. In an exposition of Van Dine's rules for writing detective fiction, Todorov ciphers out this formula: "Il faut se conformer à l'homologie suivante, quant aux renseignements sur l'histoire: auteur : lecteur = coupable : détective."[31] One may think that this analogy between the characters and art is tenuous at best or simply made because of the influence of meta-criticism or the modern critical interest in the reader. However, as we shall see, this is far from the case.

The idea of the detective as reader is engraved in the tradition of the genre. In fact, every detective is necessarily the 'ideal reader': he is the only one who has the acumen to retrieve from the many signs their exact significance. Apart from his keen observation of all types of evidence, how often do we find a detective reading an anonymous note, scrutinizing letters or reading ancient manuscripts? Dr. Mortimer, for instance, reads an eighteenth-century document and a news item from the Devon County Chronicle to Sherlock Holmes to initiate the investigation of The Hound of the Baskervilles. As reader, the detective has the power to render the examined clue, whether recondite object or enigmatic text, transparent.

In his hermeneutical enterprise, the detective examines clues and through deduction arrives at the interpretation of the mystery. Hermeneutics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the discovery of meanings. The mystery that the detective resolves entails an intellectual process which the theories of a Gadamer or a Ricoeur describe very well. Gadamer's definition applies to a wide range of processes including the detective's method which involves a progress from the unknown to the known: "Its field of application is comprised of all those situations in which we encounter meanings that are not immediately understandable but require interpretive effort." [32]

The analogy between the criminal and the writer is less visible in the detective story itself since authors have given more importance to the detective. This idea of the criminal as artist informs the work of modern authors, in particular the novels of Vladimir Nabokov. As an original contriver of an elaborate plot, the criminal resembles the writer. The criminal is like an author since he must devise the pattern which the detective will then be in a position to examine. Father Brown has the insight and the humility to acknowledge that it is the criminal, not the detective, who has the more creative role: "He thought his detective brain as good as the criminal's, which was true. But he fully realized the disadvantage. 'The criminal is the creative artist; the detective only the critic,' he said with a sour smile..." [33] One often fails to consider the intellectual cleverness of the criminal as the writer of the crime under investigation. The detective has a less inventive role — he is the follower who reconstructs the pattern fabricated by another. A correct investigation and interpretation permits the story of the criminal and his crime to become known.

Story of Crime — Story of Investigation

The detective story plot structure distinguishes itself very remarkably from other genres by possessing within its own boundaries, not one, but two stories. The crime is the definite point of demarcation between the two stories. There is the actual story of the present investigation, for example, when Holmes visits the place of the crime, examines objects and ponders over texts, questions witnesses, and then meditates in his favorite chair, at a concert or walks back and forth on the moor or in his room. This story is not always very eventful. Its ultimate purpose is to reconstruct successfully another story — the story of how, when, where and who committed a past crime. The story of the crime is, in essence, the first story. It is the one that is imbued in mystery. Although in *absentia* until the resolution, this first story is powerfully present at all times in the mind of the detective and is the cause of the second story's being. If we look at, for example, the story "The Red-Headed League," the narrative that we read is the detective's story or the second story and the story which the detective and the reader try to reconstruct is the first story. This double narrative is a very distinct particularity of the detective story structure. By definition, the detective story is dechronological and incorporates the two stories of the two primary poles of its structure — mystery and resolution embodied by the criminal and the detective. In this section, we intend to discuss the attributes of these two stories, especially the important element of time which is responsible for this inherent duality: the past crime and the immediate tale of investigation.

Let us imagine that there is a film camera placed in a position where it can record the action of a crime. This film would capture every incident during the unfolding of the event. Hence, this film would contain everything that the detective, in his search, looks for. If this cinema or film were projected after the detective has come to his own conclusions about the crime, he would be able to verify if his second story concurs with the film or the first story. Ideally, the second story should be parallel in all respects to the first story. In reality, however, a critical reader may ask himself if the detective has been able to reconstruct all aspects of the crime perfectly. The detective's story is probably a quite good approximation but still an approximation. The reader can be more certain of the accuracy of the detective's second story if the murderer himself is present when the detective dramatically exposes his resolution. The murderer can refine the detective's story and add details the detective himself had not considered. This correction of the second story is found for example in Doyle's _A Study in Scarlet_, Hammett's _The Glass Key_ and Ellery Queen's _The Chinese Orange Mystery_.

The absent story of the crime or the first story is known by the criminal (and perhaps also by a few witnesses). This absent story is retrieved for the reader through the detective's search and piecemeal reconstruction or configuration of how a crime was committed. In a detective story which includes "l'histoire du crime et l'histoire de l'enquête," there is a very strange paradox.[34] The story that is withheld is very much present, or as Todorov points out, "l'une est absente mais réelle, l'autre présente mais insignifiante."[35] In fact, we could say that 'what will have happened' is much more relevant than what is happening.[36]

Tzvetan Todorov introduced in the analysis of detective fiction the terms _fabula_ and _sjužet_, as first enunciated by the Russian formalists, to designate the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. For the formalists Shklovsky and Tomashevsky, who used their terms fabula and sjužet precisely to analyze detective stories or stories with detective elements, the terms really signified a distinction in temporal arrangement: the fabula is characterized by its order of occurrence whereas the sjužet by its temporal displacement.[37] This theory proposed by the formalists was basically a criterion to distinguish the 'reality' from which a narrative is taken with the idea of the artistic medium itself. Very generally, their terms underline the dichotomy between reality and artifice:

> La première notion correspond à la réalité évoquée, à des événements semblables à ceux qui se déroulent dans notre vie; la seconde, au livre lui-même, au récit, aux procédés littéraires dont se sert l'auteur. Dans la fable, il n'y a pas d'inversion dans le temps, les actions suivent leur ordre naturel; dans le sujet, l'auteur peut nous présenter les résultats avant les causes, la fin avant le début.[38]

Todorov, translator of the Russian formalists, used the terms fabula and sjužet in his essay on the "Typologie du roman policier." Later, he adopted Benveniste's terms histoire and discours to correspond to the concepts of the fabula or "l'ordre des événements" and the sjužet or "l'ordre du discours."[39] Whatever nomenclature is used, either by Todorov, Barthes or Genette — be it histoire, récit, discours and narration — they correspond fundamentally but a little fuzzily to the idea of fabula and sjužet. Each theorist of structuralism brings to the concept a wealth of fine distinctions. But an acceptable definition of what they conceive as the fabula or histoire / récit may be stated in these words: "the basic story stuff, the narrated universe, governed by a chronological and logical order of its own, similar to that of 'real life' and independent of artistic shaping." As a corollary, the sjužet or discours may be described as: "the artistic construction into which the 'histoire(récit)' is molded with the help of such devices as the handling of point of view, temporal deformation, digressions, analogies."[40]

In a detective tale, Todorov denotes the story of the crime as *l'histoire* and the story of the investigation as the *discours*. Our own terminology of 'first story' and 'second story' is closely connected with the idea of *fabula* and *sjužet*. Our term *first story* relates to the *fabula* while the *second story* corresponds to the *sjužet*. Throughout the narrative, the detective reveals only partial information about the mystery. It is only at the end, when all the enigmatic occurrences have been explained, that he is able to acquaint us with the first story or the *fabula*. Using Holquist's excellent expression, we see that the "distinctive feature of the detective story is that its *sjužet* consists in the discovery of its own *fabula*."[41]

Unlike most fiction, the detective story is not interested in a future but in a past action. It is not a narrative that looks forward but rather one that looks backward: "Il [le roman policier] prend le temps à rebours et renverse la chronologie....*le récit suit l'ordre de la découverte*."[42] Beginning with the moment of the crime, the detective moves backward in time to retrace, re-interpret the actions of the criminal which led to the crime. Because the investigative procedure deals with an event that has already been accomplished, the detective story must necessarily be told in reverse chronology. Mr. George Burton, the detective writer in Michel Butor's *L'Emploi du temps*, clearly instructs us on the inevitability of reverse chronology in the detective genre. He explains how the mind of the detective remains fixed on an event which occurred in the past, yet he must act out his role as investigator in the present.

> L'auteur du Meurtre de Bleston nous faisait remarquer que, dans le roman policier, le récit est fait à contre-courant, ou plus exactement qu'il superpose deux séries temporelles: les jours de l'enquête qui commencent au crime, et les jours du drame qui mènent à lui, ce qui est tout à fait naturel puisque, dans la réalité, ce travail de l'esprit tourné vers le passé s'accomplit dans le temps pendant que d'autres événements s'accumulent....[43]

The detective story has been appraised by critics of other genres or by theorists of time as the paradigm of a narrative told in reverse chronology. Jean Pouillon, for example, stresses the importance of the convention: "le prototype de ce récit renversé est le roman policier classique."[44] This basic structure of reverse chronology in a detective story stems from the co-existence of two stories — the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. What we termed the first story transpired usually in a recent past but occasionally in a far distant past, whereas the second story which leads up to the resolution is detailed in the present. Consequently, because of the two stories, there are two fundamental and very distinguishable time spans in the detective narrative.

Techniques of Narration

In the story of the investigation or the discourse, the concealment of the secret rests by and large in the hands of the narrator. If we were to read the same story plot, let us say, as told first by the friend of the detective (the classic Watson figure), or retold by an omniscient voice, by the detective himself, or even by the murderer, then we would clearly apprehend how the question of point of view can dramatically affect the presentation of the facts and the style of the story. Each narrator would bring to his version of the story his own first-hand knowledge or limited insight about the events he either participated in or viewed as observer. The narrator controls the amount and the type of information he divulges: he may withhold crucial evidence and disclose only irrelevant material, he may leave a gap in the narrative where the account of an important event would be needed, he may digress to his heart's content on insignificant details, he may even falsify issues now and then, in short, he may resort to any procedure that will baffle and mystify his reader. Traditionally the detective story has followed the viewpoint of the detective. However, a few authors have also discovered that the perspective of the murderer or even of the victim can be adopted to radically transform the genre.

When we broach the topic of narrative techniques, the first question to ask concerns the relation between the author, the narrator and the reader. In detective fiction, the relation between the narrator and the reader is very explicit: the narrator is painfully aware of his role as story-teller. He insists on revealing himself to the reader. Accordingly, he includes in his narrative direct addresses to the reader and often interrupts his recital to explain his own inadequacies of interpretation, to indicate his problems in obtaining information about the case, or to deliver comments on the aesthetics of telling his story. For example, Captain Hastings will inform his reader that he has kept notes about the particular crime but that there may be inaccuracies or flaws in the narrative due to the imprecision of his memory. Through such confessions, the self-consciousness of the narrator is very well perceived:

> My narrative of the days spent at Styles must necessarily be somewhat rambling. In my recollection of it, it presents itself to me as a series of conversations — of suggestive words and phrases that etched themselves into my consciousness.[45]

This self-consciousness of the narrator in detective stories would present the critic with an interesting subject of inquiry.

Confronted with the narrator's text which offers only partial information, misleading clues, and "temporary gaps," the reader knows he must proceed with extreme caution.[46] The narrator appears to the reader as a foe, as someone to be very wary of. Indeed, the reader is not at all disposed to believe everything that is told to him. Questioning the degree of reliability of the narrator becomes part of the convention of the genre. The reader expects the narrator to be fallible and inaccurate. On the other hand, the reader also knows that this unreliability is temporary. In the end, the narrator will explain himself and uncover all aspects of the secret. It is surprising that the critic who analyzed the concept of the reliable and unreliable narrator, Wayne C. Booth, should never have explored its skilful handling in detective fiction.[47] Also, in the modern study of the novel, critics have rarely turned to detective fiction to illustrate such problems as the self-consciousness or the unreliability of the narrator.[48]

Of the many theories and classifications of narrative techniques, we take special note of Gérard Genette's differentiation between what he terms mode and voix, or "qui voit" and "qui parle."[49] When applied to the detective story, this distinction proves very enlightening. If we observe, for example, the most classical type of narrator — the Watson figure, then it is very easy to discern the viewpoint from the narrative voice: if we ask ourselves whom are we seeing, then we would say it is the hero, Sherlock Holmes; if we ask who is speaking, then we know it is Dr. Watson. This differentiation between vision and voice demonstrates very well the relation between the character and the narrator. In a like manner, in an omniscient narrative which usually follows the viewpoint of the central protagonist, as Father Brown, the perspective again differs from the omniscient voice of the narrator. However, when the detective is the narrator, as Nick Charles in Hammett's *The Thin Man* or Philip Marlowe in Chandler's *The Big Sleep*, then the vision and voice appear to merge since the detective is both principal character and narrator. In the eventuality that the murderer should decide to tell his own tale, as Dr. Sheppard in Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, then again vision and voice should coincide. Even when the detective or the murderer is narrator, there is a very marked discrepancy between what he sees and what he will recount. It is essential, in detective narratives, that there be this distance and silence between character and narrator.

The traditional classifications of narrators, as exemplified in the typologies of Pouillon, Friedman or Stanzel, base themselves on the degree of omniscience, going from an extreme exterior objective viewpoint as seen in stories of Dashiell Hammett to the interior subjective perspective and leading ultimately to the center of one's consciousness as in the heroes of Henry James or William Faulkner.[50] Another mode of classification and one which takes into account the concepts of *fabula* and *sjužet* is intimated by the critic Roland Bourneuf. In his conclusion to a review of the standard studies on viewpoint, he educes that it may be fruitful to examine narrators with respect to their position within the fabula or sjužet and how they fashion the narrative form: "Au lieu de fonder ses réflexions sur le concept ambigu d'omniscience, la critique aurait sans doute intérêt à prendre pour point de départ la distinction entre discours et récit historique." [51] This approach would clearly indicate the importance and place of the narrator in the two stories. The narrator would develop either the second story pertaining to the action of the inquiry or the first story relating the events that led to the crime. Since the fabula and sjužet are fundamental components of all detective stories, we apprehend that this alternate classification is useful to us. It may also be a worthwhile method of analyzing narrators in other genres.

Techniques of Obfuscation and Retardation

The fifth and last important component of our model concerns the techniques of obfuscation and retardation. Following an exposé of the modes of obfuscation which render the story of the investigation ambiguous and modes of retardation which are required to prolong the narrative of the investigation, all the salient properties of our prototext will have been analyzed, namely, 1) the plot with its tripartite division of mystery, investigation and resolution, 2) the murderer and the detective as opponents, 3) the narrative with its past crime and its present tale of the reconstruction of the mystery, 4) the self-consciousness and the unreliability of the narrators, and now 5) omission and techniques of ambiguity.

Modes of obfuscation and retardation are of great value in any narrative, but especially essential in a detective narrative. If an author were writing a riddle, he would state the problem and then immediately present the solution.[52] In a detective story, the author must create an intervening space between the mystery, that is, the secret he himself has concocted, and its successful disclosure. This chasm or prolonged duration of the mystery is the story of the investigation. Consequently, in this narrative of investigation, the modes of obfuscation and retardation are most instrumental both in creating and complicating the mystery and in prolonging and postponing the resolution. We use the term obfuscation to refer to techniques as omission and dissimulation and the term retardation to include devices such as repetitions, digressions, falsifications. Through the use of these techniques, the narrative becomes more difficult, more ambiguous to interpret and more extensive. In the detective story, it is usually the narrator who relies on the techniques of obfuscation and retardation; nevertheless, the techniques themselves are basically related to the action or the plot, and to the time span or the need to "remplir la durée" of the story.[53]

Thus, the aim of the story of investigation is equivocal: it seeks to make more problematic and incomprehensible the mystery and to perpetually defer the moment of revelation rather than proceed limpidly and unhesitatingly to the explanation. However, a plot can be arrested only for a relative time — the moment will arrive when obstructing or halting the mystery will no longer be propitious. The art of writing a good suspense story consists in knowing when to hide, when to complicate, and when to reveal the secret in order to achieve the maximum effect.

Since the fabula is bracketed from the text, the detective story is constructed on a primary omission. The omission can be described as a gap or as a main ellipsis. This gap, which prompted the story of the investigation, cannot be considered a permanent gap.[54] The inquiry is the attempt to fill in the gap or the hole. In the end, this central missing information will be uncovered. Throughout the investigation, there are several temporary gaps which are explained at different intervals and help to clarify the main omission. This use of a major gap or hole is an inherent particularity of the detective genre. The technique of omission, not only of a primary omission, but of many secondary gaps, is the method by which the detective story begins and unfolds. A thread of smaller gaps and partial ambiguous clues links the segments of the narrative. Many modern novels, inspired by the detective genre, are notable for their technique of a major gap. An author like Faulkner introduces and sustains the mystery in his novels by creating a central omission, for example, the missing scene of rape in Sanctuary or the missing viewpoint of Caddy in The Sound and the Fury. What has become the classic example of omission in modern literature is, of course, the suppressed story of the murder of Jacqueline in Robbe-Grillet's Le Voyeur. It is interesting, from our point of view, that critics who mention the existence of gaps in Faulkner or Robbe-Grillet neglect to observe how these authors have been influenced by a technique associated primarily with detective fiction.[55] Even the critics of detective fiction have failed to comment adequately on the poetics of this missing indispensable gap.[56] It is from this gap or major ellipsis that the ensuing ambiguity is instituted. In short, whenever there is a gap or chasm in a story, it must be filled.

All detective stories are similar in their incorporation of primary and secondary omissions. With respect to the other techniques of obfuscation and retardation, some authors demonstrate a predilection for either suppositions, digressions, repetitions or falsifications. The techniques of obfuscation and retardation may be categorized in a general manner by resorting to the criterion of one important theorist. In a detective story, the author, narrator or character may proceed to give too much information, hence digressions and repetitions or inversely, he may proceed to give too little information, hence omissions and suppositions. Gérard Genette, by a happy coincidence, defines these counter-procedures or modes as the utilisation of paralepse and of paralipse. He calls the paralepse mode the divulgation of excess data whereas the paralipse mode is "l'omission de telle action ou pensée importante du héros focal, que ni le héros ni le narrateur ne peuvent ignorer, mais que le narrateur choisit de dissimuler au lecteur."[57] The detective story, or as Robert Champigny would like to re-entitle it, the "hermeneutic text," makes comprehensive use of these opposing procedures of revealing and withholding information.[58] Genette's dichotomy offers a cogent generalization of the two central methods used in controlling the amount of information released in a story.

Very few critics have ever studied the narrative as a text which aims to obscure and defer meanings and interpretations. Techniques as digression or suppression are rarely recognized as an essential part of the narrative. All works of fiction employ, to some extent, procedures to maintain the action and the suspense until the dénouement — such texts as Oedipus, Hamlet, Bleak House or Kamouraska contain a certain element of problem and resolution. However, their techniques of ambiguity are minimal when compared to those found in detective fiction. One theorist, Roland Barthes in S/Z, exhibits the means by which a narrative sustains the suspense and the enigma. If Barthes had formulated his model not with a work of Balzac in mind but rather with a detective story, his hermeneutic code would have been much more exhaustive and conclusive. Indeed, the techniques used to create enigmas in a Balzac or a Flaubert are almost insignificant when one thinks of the intended ambiguity of detective fiction. Barthes identifies a few processes that contribute to the mystification in a narrative as a 'hermeneutic code':

> ... l'ensemble des unités qui ont pour fonction d'articuler, de diverses manières, une question, sa réponse et les accidents variés qui peuvent ou préparer la question ou retarder la réponse; ou encore: de formuler une énigme et d'amener son déchiffrement. [59]

Although Barthes' classification or code is limited, his ideas and terms can serve to enlighten a discussion about the principal methods of withholding the solution to an enigma. It is Barthes' belief that through such strategies an author can literally control and impede a reader's participation. Barthes' model provides the literary critic of detective fiction with an indication or a glimpse of how to approach the study of the techniques of retardation.

* * *

Concept of Parody

Having completed our theoretical discussion bearing on the prototext or the central conventions of the detective story, we will presently look further afield at bordering topics: intertextualité and the procedure of parody, the tradition of the fantastic in conjunction with the detective story, the development of the detective story sub-genres. Our first concern will be to show how conventions of a genre may become too well-known until they lose all significance and then, through parody, are injected with new vigor and life. The second subject of inquiry tackles the question of the relation between the detective story and another predictive tradition — the fantastic tale. Lastly, we will examine how the detective genre, from its inception, has produced its own sub-genres that are peripherally distinct but internally similar to the classical detective story.

Laurent Jenny, when defining parody, made a very perceptive contrast: "... si la parodie est toujours intertextuelle, l'intertextualité ne se réduit pas à la parodie." [60] We have already, in our first chapter, introduced the two terms intertextualité and parody since we illustrated how our authors included allusions to detective writers or detective stories within their narration and we also mentioned the importance of parody for our authors, especially for Nabokov. We should say a few words, at this time, about the connection between intertextuality and parody. Julia Kristeva, to whom we owe the term of 'intertextualité,' defines this facet of art according to two processes: "tout texte se construit comme une mosaique de citations et tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte." [61] With Kristeva's notions of "absorption" and "transformation," we find implied the idea of bringing together at least two texts — an outside text and the text on hand. Consequently, in an intertextual reference, there is the inclusion of another artistic form in a new text. This juxtaposition affects both texts — the transference alters their meanings and causes them to emerge in a new light.

Before we continue our exposition of parody, let us pause to differentiate between the specific idea of intertextualité and the more all-encompassing concept of inner duplication or *mise en abyme*. The use of inner duplication is very prevalent in contemporary literature and particularly dominant in the Nouveau Roman. The detective story perfectly illustrates why a narrative imprisoned in its own reality (as much of modern literature) resorts to inner duplication or techniques of self-reflection. As a narcissistic text, this narrative turns away from exterior reality and confines itself to the inspection of its closed world of conventions and art.[62] Indeed, it is a special feature of the self-conscious novel to operate inner duplications within its boundaries.[63] In the detective story, the *mise en abyme* references demonstrate how this narrative is profoundly conscious of its own rules and artificiality. Hence, this inward-looking or self-reflected popular genre abounds in cross-references and inner duplications.[64] Detective stories, it may be added, distinguish themselves from most other fictions by often limiting their inner allusions exclusively to the detective genre.[65]

Instances of self-reflection or *mise en abyme* appear frequently in detective fiction, in fact, we have already spoken of a few very good examples in a previous chapter, like Carr's Dr. Fell and his lecture "on the general mechanics and development of ... the 'hermetically sealed chamber'." In another novel, *The Burning Court*, Carr introduces an intertextual allusion to Baroness Orczy. One character is compared to Orczy's famous armchair detective who literally does nothing but eat cheesecake and tie knots in the ABC teashop:

> He [Atkinson's father] takes a piece of string and ties knots in it, the way some people smoke and others twist buttons or rattle keys, to keep his hands busy. They used to call him The Old Man in the Corner. Read detective stories? Remember those Baroness Orczy stories where the old man sits in his corner, in the "blameless teashop," and eternally ties knots and designs in a piece of string?[66]

Agatha Christie is another author who relies on many inner duplications, especially very astute ones that ironically blur the borders between reality and art: "Why, he's Hercule Poirot! You know who I mean — the private detective. They say he's done the most wonderful things — just like detectives do in books."[67] We have also seen how, in this genre, the detective enjoys comparing himself to his esteemed predecessors — a Sherlock Holmes looks towards his hero Dupin, a Hercule Poirot towards Holmes: "_Mon_ _ami_ ... you ... demand of me a pronouncement à la Sherlock Holmes!"[68] Inner duplications in the detective genre are so evident that they have become a convention: the reader is anxious to encounter these moments of superimposed imagined or real detective texts or elements within the detective story.

From the examples cited above, we may notice how there are many inner duplications that refer directly to another existing work of literature. Since André Gide and his famous definition of this procedure of interior reflection as "en abyme," critics as Morrissette, Ricardou or Dällenbach, in their respective analyses, have had the detrimental knack of rendering the expression _mise en abyme_ less and less precise and clear.[69] It would be advantageous to modern criticism, and especially to criticism of parody, if a distinction were made between _mise en abyme_ and _intertextualité_. While it is true that intertextuality is one type of _mise en abyme_, the general concept is not at all related to parody, whereas the notion of intertextuality admits the idea of parody. For example, in Robbe-Grillet and Hubert Aquin, the difference between _mise en abyme_ and _intertextualité_ is very visible if we contrast the imagined painting of _La Défaite de Reichenfels_ in _Dans le labyrinthe_ to Hans Holbein's painting _Mystère des deux Ambassadeurs_ (1533) in _Trou de mémoire_. Both paintings are inner duplications, however, only the second is an intertextual reference. The allusion to Holbein introduces the concept of parody since there is now the collocation of one existing text or painting to another. With the less precise term of *mise en abyme*, we cannot distinguish if the reference is to a real or imagined other work. If the inner duplication is imagined, then it obviously cannot have any connection with parody. To conclude, *mise en abyme* has absolutely no place in the formation of parody but *intertextualité* is often a determining factor that will lead to parody.

In the concept of parody, two entities are involved: the presence of an old text and its artistic rehandling or reshaping. It is a verifiable fact that the transference of one or many texts, or of *intertextualité*, to a narrative often indicates a parodic intent on the part of the author, or in the words of Michel Butor "La citation la plus littérale est déjà dans une certaine mesure une parodie. Le simple prélèvement la transforme...." or to repeat Jenny's expression "la parodie est toujours intertextuelle." [70] This signifies that the older text has the ability to inspire criticism and engender change. The essence of parody can be described in various ways but two primary operations are always presupposed: "la destruction de l'ensemble ancien et nouvelle construction des anciens éléments." [71] Thus, for a Russian formalist as Tynianov, parody is characterized as a *destruction* and *construction* of formal elements, and for Kristeva, it is a procedure of *absorption* and *transformation*. For another critic, Edward Said, this concept of appropriation and alteration is conceived as the *molestation* of the "source of a writer's 'authority'." [72] According to our own terminology, used throughout the thesis, parody is the ability to make *variations on a model or prototext*. In any parody, consequently, there must be this essential, dynamic contrast between the older text or imitation and the newer work or the construction, transformation or variation. The art historian in John Fowles' story The Ebony Tower underlines these two points very well when he speaks of parody as both an act of praise and a vigorous attack on the original work: "behind the mysteriousness and the ambiguity ... behind the modernity of so many of the surface elements there stood both a homage and a kind of thumbed nose to a very old tradition."[73]

Since the parodic text functions on two levels – the outside text in relation to the new text, it demands another type of reading method. The reader is required to bear in mind the original text all the while he is reading so that he can compare and oppose it to the reshaped variation. Jonathan Culler describes this bifocal mode of reading in his examination of parody:

> ... it [the spirit of parody] invites one to a more literal reading, establishing a contrast between the naturalization required for appreciation of the original and the more literal interpretive process appropriate to the parody.[74]

The history of literary genres teaches us that authors at first are fond of new techniques, then the newness wears off and the technique becomes a predictable convention until ultimately it is exposed by means of parody. Throughout the evolution of a genre, conventions have been, to use Shklovsky's term, "laid bare." In our "Introduction," we presented the idea of defamiliarization as a process of continual growth and the rejuvenation of a genre. According to the Russian formalists, the use of parody or the imitation and exaggeration of conventional techniques was one of the most expedient ways to make the familiar seem strange and new and thereby produce a defamiliarization. Parody finds itself at the heart of this antithetic oscillation or dialectic between the poles of habitualization and defamiliarization. In the evolution of the detective story, as in all genres, parody fosters growth and transition:

> Dans l'évolution de chaque genre, il se produit des moments où le genre utilisé jusqu'alors avec des objectifs entièrement sérieux ou 'élevés' dégénère et prend une forme comique ou parodique. ... Ainsi se produit la régénération du genre: il trouve de nouvelles possibilités et de nouvelles formes.[75]

Contemporary literature has, indeed, through the use of parody, generated new possibilities and new forms. Our three authors, Borges, Robbe-Grillet and especially Nabokov, are reputed for their parodic spirit. These three authors are related in their choice of the detective story as the 'ancient text' from which to re-create new patterns and new themes. All conventions as established in our prototext, whether the plot-outline, the characters, the narrative point of view, the techniques of ambiguity, are open to ingenious imitations. The title of our thesis: 'Variations on the Detective Story' signals out this phenomenon of parody or how there is the adaptation of an original model and its modification or variation.

* * *

The Detective Story and the Fantastic Tale

What is the correspondence between the detective story and other literary traditions? Since the detective tale is of recent origin and is very stylized, it has close affinity with other predictive structures, particularly with the fantastic tale and the Gothic romance. In this penultimate section of our chapter, we intend to briefly review how there is a "proximité structurale" between the detective story and the fantastic tale.[76] We devote attention exactly to the fantastic tale because our authors, especially Borges and Robbe-Grillet, are aware of the close affiliation between the fantastic and the tale of ratiocination.[77]

The detective story and the fantastic tale have a long history of association which dates back to E.A. Poe and the origin of the genre. Contrary to critical opinion, the detective story did not stem full-grown "from the bulging brow of Poe."[78] Steeped in the tradition of the fantastic (and also Gothic tales) and influenced by authors as Hoffmann, Poe transformed the fantastic tale by interposing in the marvellous and the phantasmal the element of logic or reason. The difference between the fantastic tale and the detective story lies principally in the dénouement. The detective story, as opposed to the fantastic tale, requires a rational explication of the mystery. This means that the fantastic or impossible situation in the detective story must be rationally explained in a conclusion: thus "this fantastic quality," as Rabkin in his study of The Fantastic in Literature often repeats, "is naturalized by explanation within a stable set of ground rules" or we could add, of a prototext.[79] The key to the divergence between the two types of tales is this idea of the logical, rational answer that closes the text.

In a fantastic tale, the hero and the reader experience what Caillois terms "le sursaut d'irreducible étrangeté" or what Todorov calls moments of "hésitation" when, as rational beings, they have to accept an impossible situation.[80] The reader is confronted, at the climax of a fantastic story, with a solution that is either "vraisemblable et surnaturelle" or "invraisemblable et rationnelle."[81] If he wishes to remain within the world of the supernatural, the reader must accept the solution that is consonant with the action. To opt for a rational explication would destroy the story. For instance, in Anne Hébert's fantastic tale Héloise, it is difficult for the rational mind to admit that a vampire killed the lady. To dismiss the story and conclude that the hero is over-anxious, of unsound mind or that the episode is simply a dream would be contrary to the aesthetics of the fantastic tale. The story is at the level of the impossible and the solution must remain in the realm of the impossible. The detective story, however, also exhibits a mystery that appears impossible, but in the end, proves to be logically and rationally deductive. As one character tells Poirot: "The whole thing is a fantasy. ... Show me how the impossible can be made possible!"[82] Every reader knows that the convention of the detective story stipulates that a rational plausible explication will be delivered by the detective. Therefore, the reader experiences only a relative 'hésitation' when the explication of the uncanny is announced. The reader will be surprised, he will have to reinterpret the events, but he will ultimately admit that the solution convincingly resolves the impossible.

The borderline between the fantastic and the rational is especially thin in many detective stories. In stories of the hermetically sealed room or in stories where a supernatural ambiance prevails, as in Poe's "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" and Doyle's "The Speckled Band" and also The Hound of the Baskervilles, the detective story has indeed stumbled into the fantastic.[83] In such tales, the detective manages to propose a logical answer that dispels all mystery. However, a critical reader remains discomfited and unsatisfied with the supposed rational answer of either an Ourang-Outang, a serpent or a dog as the criminal agents. These resolutions can appear slightly more fantastic than rational.

There are occasions when the fantastic in the detective story is never conclusively eradicated. In stories like Carr's The Burning

Court, the narrative remains ambiguous, doubtful and the reader hesitates between the rational and the irrational resolution. The detective debunks the supernatural and then the heroine reinstates it. In the last pages of the story, this character insists that she had administered the poison all along. Hence, the final words contradict the detective's neat explication. In this story, as in many modern works, the author has, with deliberate intent, presented two valid conclusions — one rational and one fantastic — and given the reader not a choice between two alternatives but a third option. An author "may skillfully and cleverly plot his story in such a way that a natural explanation and a supernatural one account equally well for all the facts."[84] This resolution that looks both ways or the "Janus resolution" weds the fantastic to the detective story. A reader can now legitimately read the story on two levels and believe in both the rational and the fantastic. This type of ending, for example, is very noticeable in Dorothy Sayers' interesting tale "Striding Folly" where the central protagonist can be interpreted as either the dreamer or the murderer.

Modern literature will pursue much further this idea that a rational answer does not exclude a fantastic one. The detective form is flexible enough to permit an agglomeration of many possible solutions. Throughout the narrative of a detective story, a reader apprehends several possible resolutions to the problem. Formerly, these possibilities were dissolved by the detective's irrevocable conclusion. Today, without a fixed explication, the work remains open-ended to a variety of indeterminate resolutions. Hence, every conjecture and possibility imagined is as valid as another to explain the mystery.[85] In consequence, the mystery is never really solved and the reader hovers amongst a range of possible conjectures indefinitely. With respect to the fantastic, the detective genre has indeed come full circle: one author, E.A. Poe, strove to rationalize the fantastic, and now authors like Borges strive to maintain the fantastic in the detective story.

* * *

The Detective Story and Its Sub-Genres

The detective genre has been unquestionably, since Poe, extremely volatile and dynamic. Of course, the prototext or the nucleus of the genre stays constant, but the outer-text or the casing can include other material. In fact, we have just seen how it can blend with other traditions like the fantastic. The classical detective story adopts a restrictive mode and tries to refine the pattern to remain as 'pure' a form as possible. The other mode is the expansive one. In the evolution of the genre, authors have used the 'pure form' and then brought into prominence one or more characteristics of the pattern or combined the original form with extrinsic material, often reflecting the culture and society surrounding the author. To trace the development of these 'impure' sub-genres, we shall make reference to the nomenclature of the different schools and to two theories, one intrinsic and the other extrinsic, that explain the family resemblance between the detective story proper and the thriller and spy fiction. These terms "thriller" and "spy fiction," it should be observed, are used indiscriminately by criticism. For instance, Ralph Harper in his analysis of the thriller concerns himself much more with authors as Buchan and Le Carré than with Hammett and Ross Macdonald.[86]

Remove Poirot from his genteel manor house and his comfortable afternoon tea and place him in a dingy, rough, back-alley bar in

Chicago ("down these mean streets a man must go"), and the poor fellow will appear even more ludicrous. The first author who chose a totally different world view had to accommodate a new type of hero and institute a new type of investigative adventure. It was Hammett and Chandler in America who created this new type of story mirroring crime in the modern city. The traditional way of describing this new offspring has been to compare it with the original in absolute antithetic terms. On the one hand, there is, as John Dickson Carr discerns, "the world of Sherlock Holmes" and on the other hand "the world of Sam Spade."[87] Or again, Raymond Chandler formulates this opposition as follows: "Hammett took murder out of the Venetian vase and dropped it into the alley."[88] In summary, while one story concentrates on the rational, the cerebral, the refined, the other distinguishes itself by its adventure, its violence, its toughness. The question of language and style, although rarely noted, is another major difference between the pure form and its derivatives.[89] Hammett's or Chandler's original vocabulary hits the mark: the toughness comes through mainly because of the style. To gauge the opposing worlds of Hercule Poirot and Sam Spade, we need simply imagine Poirot saying: "I won't play the sap for you."[90]

To categorize this opposition between the pure form and its hybrids, critics have used a convenient grid. They contemplate the history of the detective genre according to two primary schools — one British and the other American. The British school of Holmes and Poirot specializes in the puzzle or the strict game of logic. The very influential American type of detective story added flesh and blood to the puzzle. This useful categorization is upheld by most critics and authors. Borges, for example, surveys the evolution of the genre by acknowledging the two schools:

> Dans le genre anglais, l'énigme, le mystère est résolu par le détective et le roman est construit en évitant les scènes de violence et les débordements sexuels. Tout cela, au contraire, domine dans le genre américain; on a d'abord affaire à un roman d'aventure compliqué de psychiatrie et d'un goût pathologique pour la violence qui fait que le policier est, en général, un gangster au service de la loi. [91]

The impression of opposition and division which the British and American schools suggest is correct but only to a certain degree: one must not forget the underlying similarity of the pattern. The pure form and its sub-genres differ but they are alike in the fundamentals; that is, they all possess the salient characteristics of the prototext. This resemblance between the detective model and the thriller and spy fiction is very easy to perceive when we take into account the presence of two narratives in the story. As we explained earlier, in a detective story, the sjužet or the second story is subsidiary to the first story or fabula. Therefore, the story of the investigation is insignificant on its own; it exists only for the elucidation of the past crime. In the thriller and spy fiction, there is a dramatic shift of emphasis from the fabula to the sjužet. In these fictions, the story of the investigation or the sjužet takes precedence. [92] Consequently, priority is given to the adventure of the investigation rather than to the past crime. Hence, the violent and fast-paced adventure focuses attention on itself. Since the story of the adventure is more elaborate and action-filled, the detective is exposed to all sorts of enmeshments and entrapments in the chase. This investigative adventure demands that the detective physically confront the criminal and his environment instead of standing aloof and above the action as a Sherlock Holmes. To conclude, sub-genres prize adventure and pursuit and violence, nevertheless, retain the required ingredients of a detective story pattern. However greatly a critic like John Cawelti analyzes the minute differences between the puzzle and the adventure, in the end, he must come to assert that:

> The hard-boiled formula resembles the main outlines of the classical detective story's pattern of action. It, too, moves from the introduction of the detective and the presentation of the crime, through the investigation, to a solution and apprehension of the criminal.[93]

Another view of the volatile process of the invention of sub-genres can be educed. We can conceive of the pattern found in all stories of the genre as a kernel or nucleus to which extrinsic material is added in order to create shades of differences. Apprehended in this manner, the hard-boiled story and spy fiction can be considered as texts that reflect the reality of their particular time, place, society and culture. In this explication of the formation of sub-genres, the notion of customs, history and fields of knowledge, in short, of any extra data is important. On a very simple level, this means that an Argentinian could situate his adventure on the pampas or that an Albertan could depict the prairie and the oil wells or that an author interested in the occult, feminism, or economics could interpolate his knowledge into the story. For instance, this extrinsic explication of the evolution of the genre through the addition of erudite and eclectic material to the definite pattern of the detective story can be illustrated very aptly by an Ishmael Reed novel. The author of Mumbo Jumbo adopted the precise structure of the detective tale — "I followed[ed] the classical detective story or mystery form, follow[ed] it more closely than I had the western or gothic form of my two previous novels," — and then incorporated into this plot nucleus his personal interests — "a reconstruction of the Jazz Age, a commentary on the Harlem Renaissance, a capsule summary of Western and African cultural history." [94] In Canada, to state a cognate example, Tim Wynne-Jones, the author of the recent prize-winning novel Odd's End wrote a mystery plot à la Patricia Highsmith and then added to his story, due to his love of the fine arts, interior design and antiques, a substantial catalogue of objets d'art.

If we take a bird's eye view of the history of the sub-genres, this idea of extrinsic material adjoined to the structure is clearly visible: we see how Chandler in the 1940's, used the detective story as a vehicle to portray the evils of organized crime in a democratic society; or how Le Carré, in the 1960's, highlighted the reality of the cold war and of international networks of bureaus of intelligence and the psychology of deception where man is but a pawn of the state; or how in the 1980's, the authors of the popular T.V. script Dallas present games of power where only the very rich, the undaunted and the brilliantly wicked could ever hope to play with J. R. Ewing.

* * *

CHAPTER THREE

"You know my powers, my dear Watson, and yet
at the end of three months I was forced to confess
that I had at last met an antagonist [Professor
Moriarty], who was my intellectual equal. My
horror at his crimes was lost in my admiration
at his skill."

A. C. Doyle

VARIATIONS ON A PLOT STRUCTURE:
BORGES

The Detective Plot Structure

Theorists of plot, from Aristotle to Brémond, agree on a minimal definition of what constitutes a plot: it is the arrangement in a narrative of characters and their actions and any other elements of the story according to a unifying and controlling pattern or structure. This guiding structure which informs a work of art is based on a series of planned episodes linked in an order and progressing logically and inevitably towards an end point. The plot *makes* or shapes the story or *fabula* into a *sjužet* or an artistic construction noteworthy for its wholeness, symmetry and aesthetic qualities.[1] The author and the reader respectively create and re-create this central plot pattern: on the one hand, the author is responsible for the ordering and the arranging of the causal links and thus the fashioning of the story into a definite and cohesive plot structure, and on the other hand, the reader is required to perceive and remember the governing plot pattern of the work.[2]

In all literary works, there is to some degree the pressing need for an author to artistically shape his narrative or to give form to a random story outline. Even long and seemingly amorphous texts such as a picaresque novel like Thackeray's *Barry Lyndon*, or a *Bildungsroman* like Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, or a *roman fleuve* like Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe* must be directed and constrained to mould a recognizable design. An effective way for a writer to achieve a coherent and unified plot structure in his narrative is to adopt the short story form. In a short story, the plot is often devised with the end point and its effect clearly formulated beforehand; all sequences of the plot are extremely regulated to conform with, in Poe's words, a 'pre-established design.' A short story reduces the plot by excluding dispensable characters and incidents and accelerates the unfolding of the action. In a very organized work like the short story, events in the plot are pared down and refined to a polish. Borges, for instance, manages to contrive very complex and symmetrical plot patterns in his own unique invention of a short short story form.[3]

Detective fiction is one genre, possibly the genre, which most distinguishes itself from others by bringing into the limelight the supremacy of plot construction in a work. As our prototext chapter elucidated, the detective story is primarily determined by its rigid and stylized pattern or prescribed structure. For this reason, many detective works are cast in a short story form. To briefly review: the detective story is a well-crafted artifice that looks first and foremost inwards at its own fashioning and organization. Unnecessary characters and episodes and superfluous descriptions are trimmed away to instill a more unified wholeness into the pattern. The distinct plot pattern in a detective story is elaborated according to precise formulas or conventions, the most important convention being the two integral components of the presiding structure — the mystery and the resolution. Hence, the entire plot structure aims at the clarification in the denouement of an enigma — an enigma usually of a criminal nature, evoked usually at the outset of the narrative.

The chronological or sequential order of the story or fabula and the artistic order of the plot or sjužet are sensibly similar in realistic literature where the fabula or the raw material from which the story originates and the artistic composition are relatively indiscriminate one from the other. When we examine novels like Madame Bovary, War and Peace, La Condition humaine or Bonheur d'occasion, the chronological order is quite closely respected in the artistic text and the reader can easily and immediately grasp the plot pattern and gradually the ensuing events. For instance, Charles Bovary's awkwardness and obtuseness in the exposition scene foretell his limitations and his derisory fate in the conclusion. A detective story, conversely, is a narrative where the distance between the chronological order and the artistic production is outrightly visible. In fact, the distinction between the natural and the artistic level is so great that the detective story plot furnished the formalist critics with a handy and exceptional genre to study. We could trace a line of influence from Poe and his theories on plot fabrication of the short story and the detective story to later critical schools as the formalists and structuralists who reconsidered the nature and function of plot, especially of the detective story plot in fiction.[4]

The detective genre grants the critic an exquisite plot from which to set up a model of structural units. Only a handful of specialists, notwithstanding the reality that the foremost characteristic of detective fiction is its plot structure, have ever considered the possibility of a formal approach to the detective genre. It is interesting that Shklovsky, even before Vladimir Propp's analysis of folktales, pioneered the study of plot constituents by turning to mystery stories — especially those of Dickens and Doyle. His analysis of Doyle proved that there existed similar plot segments in every Sherlock Holmes story. He loosely categorized these units of action according to nine general points ranging from the discussion of earlier cases to Watson's misguided non sequitur and to Holmes' peroration about the facts.[5]

The detective story should have become an ideal platform for structural studies. Decades after Shklovsky, we ascertain with surprise that only a few critics have deemed it enlightening to investigate the intricate and very orderly plot pattern of detective fiction. The paucity of formal critical analyses of plot, not only in detective fiction but in literature as a whole, is quite alarming. Compared to other aspects of the novel or the short story that are overly discussed, especially narrative perspective and style, the mechanics of plotting remain in relative darkness.[6] Let us however take cognizance of at least two critics, Scheglov and O'Toole, who have explored the detective plot structure but limited themselves to the writings of Arthur Conan Doyle.

Scheglov, in an article entitled "Towards a Description of Detective Story Structure," coded the number of plot units in only the exposition scene of many Sherlock Holmes stories. In the examination of plot units, he discovered that every action in the prologue revolved around the fundamental opposition between "security" and "adventure."[7] This dichotomy between, let us say, the security of the Baker street apartment and the adventure when the client arrives is reflected even in the very syntagmatic units and style of the stories. And O'Toole, borrowing ideas from Russian formalism, established his own theory about plot patterns using only one Sherlock Holmes story, "The Sussex Vampire," as representative of the Doyle corpus. In his article "Approaches to Narrative Structure," O'Toole defines the underlying constant in the fifty-six Sherlock Holmes stories as "the triumph of reason over the irrational."[8] The critic's presentation of his methodology touches upon every essential point found in a structural inquiry: "to study the interplay of a finite 'set of rules' operating on a finite 'lexicon' of people, actions and objects to produce an infinite variety of possible textual realizations."[9] O'Toole's original contribution to plot analysis resides in the fact that he insists on adding to the specific structural attention to plot other areas of investigation as narrative viewpoint, setting and style. We agree with O'Toole that narrative viewpoint is a determining factor in the structuring of a text and, as our next chapter shall demonstrate, narrative perspective is the second best method of creating variations on the detective story.

Apart from the close scrutiny of the structure of a Sherlock Holmes detective plot which was found to be based on either 'security and adventure' or 'reason and irrationality', we should underline how one eminent structuralist, Claude Brémond, has instituted a system built on polarization which can be applied very well to detective fiction (even though Brémond himself never alludes to the detective genre.) [10]Inspired by Propp's synthesis of plot elements in Russian folktales, Claude Brémond has sought to retrieve from literary texts a "logique des possibles narratifs." [11] He believes that an examination of plot segments should include the characters, or to use Greimas' term the actant, together with the action. We are particularly attracted to Brémond's idea of the bound connection that exists between the characters and their actions. His system purports that all events in a narrative are distributed according to a universal and dynamic dialectical rule: every action either contributes to the improvement of a situation or can precipitate a downfall. Brémond's terms for these processes are l'amélioration and la dégradation. In this perpetual tension or struggle, the characters are known as l'agent and le patient. For a critic of detective fiction, what is most interesting about Brémond's model is the idea of viewing each action in its totality or in relation to its opposite. For example, if we consider the sequence which Brémond calls piéger or ensnarement, there are two opposing aspects to one single action — the success of one protagonist will undoubtedly mean the failure of the other: if a detective resolves the mystery, this implies that the criminal's plan was imperfect, or "la tromperie de l'un est en même temps la duperie de l'autre; la solution de la tâche par l'un, suppose en même temps la faute de l'autre." [12] In detective fiction, the plot presents fundamentally the interplay of opposing forces, the struggle of an allié against an adversaire. In effect, Brémond's description of the process of piéger could be read as a précis of a detective plot:

> Si l'adversaire semble disposer de moyens de protection efficaces, l'agresseur a intérêt à le prendre au dépourvu.... Le piège se développe en trois temps: d'abord, une tromperie: ensuite, si la tromperie réussit, une faute de la dupe; enfin, si le processus fautif est conduit jusqu'à son terme, l'exploitation par le trompeur de l'avantage acquis, qui met à sa merci un adversaire désarmé. [13]

In detective fiction, Brémond's schema of a successful and an unsuccessful action or the "pattern of conflict" is most often between the detective and the criminal. [14] During the course of a detective story, the adversaries and their actions are closely interlocked. Indeed, in the traditional or classical detective story structure, the thoughts and actions of a Sherlock Holmes are solely concerned with the prior plans and actions of a Professor Moriarty. Thus, in the detective's search for the criminal, the detective becomes closely allied to his opponent and the possibility exists that he may even be the murderer himself. [15] In most detective stories, the pattern of conflict centers on the detective and the murderer since the narrative opens with the omission of the crime and ends with the detective's explication of the mystery or the closure of the omission. Although the traditional detective structure begins with the mystery followed by the sedentary or active search leading to the solution, the mystery can be positioned elsewhere in the plot structure and thereby occasion changes in the narrative. Few detective writers consign the crime to other positions in the text, nevertheless it is possible for an author to shift his center of emphasis from the detective and his story of the investigation to the murderer or the victim and the story of the crime. For instance, if the detective story culminates with the crime, the accent will be placed on the murderer and his machinations or on the victim entrapped and waiting for his impending doom. Modern literature has explored these displacements in the structure of detective fiction and has given primacy to the murderer and/or the victim. Take for example the repeated structure of the duel scene either in the foreground or in the background of Borges' _ficciones_. The duel pattern adopts the detective structure where the murderer seeks out his opponent or where the victim lies passively waiting for his death. In the novels or stories of each of our authors, Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet, the detective plot structure has been re-arranged and hence the relationship between the detective and the murderer is frequently supplanted by the new relationship between murderer and victim.

The crime or mystery in a detective story, as we observe, is the decisive factor which will determine the role of the opponents and the pattern of action.[16] If an author chooses to locate the mystery at the outset of his narrative, as most detective writers do, the major action will necessarily focus upon the detective and his investigative procedure to capture the criminal. Should the mystery, however, be posited midway in the narrative as in Graham Greene's Brighton Rock, there is both the anticipation before the crime and the investigation after the crime. In the event that an author situates the mystery at the end of his story as in Boileau-Narcejac's Les Diaboliques the plot structure is entirely devoted to anticipation and suspense. A few detective stories like Agatha Christie's And Then There Were None and The ABC Murders include not one but a whole series of crimes and a few thrillers like Frederick Forsyth's The Day of the Jackal never have the crime actually materialize during the narrative. The different possible positions of a crime in a detective story can be clearly diagrammed (the X refers to the position of the crime):

X investigation (usual structure)

anticipation X investigation

anticipation X

X X X X

X X (outside the narrative)

In addition, the nature or type of mystery will engender changes in the story. In the detective genre, the mystery is normally a murder but it could also be simply the foreshadowing of a crime as in Doyle's "The Red-Headed League," or a form of cryptogram as in Poe's "The Gold Bug" or again a crime with metaphysical or theological implications as in most of

Chesterton's stories like "The Honour of Israel Gow" or "The Sign of the Broken Sword." An author like Jorge Luis Borges, to cite a modern example, is partial not only to duels but also to intellectual problems and puzzles or ciphers, and an author like Alain Robbe-Grillet, to cite another example, finds obsessions transferable to the detective structure.

Altering the position of the crime is a very significant method for initiating a modification of the detective plot line. However, modern authors like Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet have brought about deeper rooted transformations of the detective plot structure. We can summarize their substantial variations on the pattern by classifying them under two general procedures. Firstly, an unqualified transmutation of the plot may be carried out by dispensing with one of the essential constituents of the detective structure, that is — leaving the narrative with no definite solution. Secondly, a thorough transmutation of the plot pattern may also be generated by over-complicating the incidents and causal links to form an intricate network or labyrinth of major plot patterns and sub-patterns, that is — overworking the plot design in the narrative.

By omitting the resolution to a problem or mystery, many modern authors have effected a drastic operation that completely abolishes the classical plot pattern. Without the required resolution, the mystery remains opened, inconclusive and suspended indefinitely. Whereas a closed narrative with one final correct solution eliminated all doubt and ambiguity, the plot structure of a mystery without a resolution remains in the realm of infinite conjectures and possibilities and forces the reader to imagine an investigation that would never end. The notion of a mystery deprived of a solution carries with it the idea that any conceivable supposition or conjecture is as tenable as another. The plot's irresolution also suggests that the investigation could be pursued interminably and therefore the search would become an infinite quest. There was already a soupçon of open-ended mysteries in traditional detective fiction when authors like J. D. Carr and D. Sayers arranged their plot patterns to offer at least two equally valid solutions to one problem (the Janus solution)— one rational and one irrational. In modern literature, especially with Borges and Robbe-Grillet, the inconclusiveness and the open-endedness signifies that the detective plot pattern has been transferred from the world of rational explication to the world of the fantastic or to a "poëtique de l'incertain."[17]

The second method of creating a drastic variation on the detective structure is founded not on the dispensation with a plot component but on the over-contrivance of the entire plot. This over-complication of an already inherently well-defined and organized plot is produced through the innumerable repetitions of symmetrical or opposing sequences of action. Hence, the very unified and contrived detective plot has the potentiality to become a veritable labyrinth of plot threads. In the hands of a Borges or Robbe-Grillet, the intricate detective plot is made to transmit a surfeit of echoes and re-echoes or of coincidences and duplications. It had always been relatively easy for an author to exceed the bounds of the artificially constructed detective plot and overwork the system of correspondences and coincidences. Like the irresolution of the mystery which peered through in some detective stories, the inordinate entanglement of the plot surfaces in a few detective tales. The modern sub-genre of spy fiction is an excellent illustration of this complicated interweaving of many plot strands. With respect to our authors, Nabokov is an expert at manipulating the too many coincidences of his plot structures and this synchronization of actions between the model and the mimic in novels like Despair and Lolita reaches its apex of "contrapuntal pyrotechnics" in Pale Fire. Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet, each in his own inimitable style and for his own unique intention, crafts his super-organized plots by means of duplications and repetitions.

Because the plot of detective fiction is so controlled and artificially fabricated, such a narrative gives the reader the impression that the characters are subordinated to the whims of superior forces. A sense of destiny can emanate from a plot that depends too heavily on correspondences and coincidences within its artifice. Whenever there is a very careful plotting of a work, the events create their own system of causality and operate above and beyond the characters. It is the over-plotting of the detective story that is mainly responsible for the sense of a ruling destiny or fate in the narrative. Such modern authors as Dürrenmatt, Robbe-Grillet, Borges and Nabokov are very adept at making the implicit role of fate or destiny explicit as directing force or principle. This over-contrivance of the plot which results in the appearance of a governing fate is very evident for instance in Nabokov's The Defense when Luzhin, confronted by a proliferation of distinguishable patterns — not only in chess but in his own life — feels trapped and envisages that the only exit from his inexorable fate is to "drop out of the game":

> Just as some combination, known from chess problems, can be indistinctly repeated on the board in actual play — so now the consecutive repetition of a similar pattern was becoming noticeable in his present life. ... And the thought that the repetition would probably continue was so frightening that he was tempted to stop the clock of life, to suspend the game for good ... [18]

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The detective story, because it is essentially structured on a well-wrought plot, imperiously engages its reader. The author engineers his mystery with an eye constantly on the alert, attentive yet confident in his skill to baffle and overpower his real opponent — the reader. The reader must measure his intellectual acumen to that of the author in the 'disentanglement of what another entangled' to paraphrase Poe. The creative effort on the part of the author in organizing his plot, in short, is matched by the creative effort on the part of the reader in deciphering and re-organizing the mystery plot. In truth, the author and the reader are the two rivals in the detective contest: "... as in chess, the antagonists are really two, for the detective story is a battle royale between the author and the reader." [19] The reader is thus invited to actively participate in the reconstruction of the plot.

The reader holds a prominent stature vis-à-vis the detective story since he occupies a central role — his role of decipherer outside the text is analogous to the role of the detective inside the story. The homology between the role of the detective and the reader has been perceived by such detective writers or critics as Poe, Chesterton and Todorov. For all intent and purpose, the reader, like Sherlock Holmes himself, is asked to reconstitute or piece together the author's original design or pattern into an intelligible whole. Holmes' words to Watson in "The Musgrave Ritual" concerning his method of inquiry and his enthusiasm for solving a problem could be that of any reader confronted with a detective tale: "You can imagine, Watson, with what eagerness I listened to this extraordinary sequence of events, and endeavoured to piece them together, and to devise some common thread upon which they might all hang." [20] This contiguity between the detective and the reader is even more apparent when the author outrightly challenges the reader as in Ellery Queen's The Chinese Orange Mystery: "I maintain that at this point in your reading ... you have all the facts in your possession essential to a clear solution of the mystery. You should be able, here, now, henceforward, to solve the puzzle of the murder."[21]

In his battle with the author, the reader is in a singularly disadvantageous position. We should not forget that the author's major intention in a detective story is to stimulate but more importantly to thwart interpretation: the text is chaotic and yet potentially orderly, opaque yet potentially clear, irresolvable yet potentially reducible. Until the reader arrives at the end of the narrative, ideally he cannot discern the omissions and the complications and he will be unable to identify the function of a particular action with respect to the comprehensive plot pattern. Only after completing a first reading or after a re-reading will the reader be disposed to assemble the data, recombine the fragments and re-group them to form a cohesive whole. The reader's 'endeavour to piece the plot together' is incomparably more difficult in a story like "The Musgrave Ritual" than in Madame Bovary since the author deliberately and painstakingly disorganized or disarrayed the fabula so that the sjužet or the artistic text makes the story outline or the fabula incomprehensible until the end point. Consequently, the reader has to repeat, but in a reverse operation, the same process that the author initially charted. To illustrate, when Charles Dickens' proceeded with the actual composition of his mystery plot Barnaby Rudge, the chronological or natural order was never meant to be the substance of the narrative text itself. Dickens inverted the chronological order and, from the conclusion, reworked his material to coalesce with his intended resolution and then added complexities and ambiguities that would impede interpretation. Poe, as reader of Dickens' novel, had to be equipped with a good knowledge of the entire written text before attempting to understand or interpret the plot. The structure of the mystery in its wholeness or completeness could only be apprehended retrospectively or when Poe had "re-peruse[d] Barnaby Rudge — and with a pre-comprehension of the mystery."[22] After his 're-perusal', like every other reader of detective fiction, Poe could perceive and appreciate the author's original "pre-established design":

> But this [chronological] order would by no means have suited the purpose of the novelist, whose design has been to maintain the secret of the murder .... Every point is so arranged as to perplex the reader, and whet his desire for elucidation.[23]

The parallel between the detective and the reader and the fundamental participation of the reader in the elucidation of the mystery has far-reaching significance for contemporary literature. The reader's contribution to the explication of the text as a sine qua non of detective fiction furnishes modern authors with excellent reasons for having a penchant for tales of ratiocination. The reader of such enigmatic texts as Bartleby the Scrivener, The Turn of the Screw, Der Prozess, Moderato cantabile or La Jalousie is requested to collect, reconstruct, and interpret disparate elements to form a coherent ~~story~~ outline and speculate upon the confusion and possible solution. This active participation of the reader is often indicated by modern writers like Butor and Robbe-Grillet. In fact, Butor went so far as to include, in his categories of time in the narrative, a third time span "le temps de la lecture."[24] All modern writers would express their agreement with Robbe-Grillet's reminder that the reader must co-operate with the author in completing the creative act.

Speaking especially about his enigmatic L'Année dernière à Marienbad in his essay "Temps et description," Robbe-Grillet's idea of the reader as co-author with a definite "fonction créatrice" is clearly voiced:

> ... l'auteur aujourd'hui proclame l'absolu besoin qu'il a de son [le lecteur] concours, un concours actif, conscient, créateur. Ce qu'il lui demande, ce n'est plus de recevoir tout fait un monde achevé, plein, clos sur lui-même, c'est au contraire de participer à une création, d'inventer à son tour l'oeuvre ....[25]

* * *

Borges: "el género policial ... un ideal de invención, de rigor, de elegancia"

There is probably no clearer single statement of what Borges cherishes most about detective fiction than the one found in Bioy Casares' review of the volume El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan. His essay eloquently exposes the pre-eminent reasons behind Borges' attraction for the detective genre and his recognition of its stylized and predictive form as a positive value. Borges always thought that, if the detective genre should ever have a rightful place in the mainstream of literature, it would be due to its qualities of order, rigor and lucidity:

> Borges, como los filósofos de Tlön, ha descubierto las posibilidades literarias de la metafísica; .... El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan crea y satisface la necesidad de una literatura de la literatura y del pensamiento. ... Pero los antecedentes de estos ejercicios de Borges ... están en la mejor tradición de la filosofía y en las novelas policiales.
>
> Tal vez el género policial no haya producido un libro. Pero ha producido un ideal: un ideal de invención, de rigor, de elegancia ... para los argumentos. Destacar la importancia de la construcción: éste es, quizá, el significado del género en la historia de la literatura.[26]

One of our authors, Alain Robbe-Grillet, in an interesting book review written in 1952 and precisely on Bioy Casares' science fiction novel La invención de Morel (hence this review was written just at the time of Robbe-Grillet's first novels), begins his critique by referring to Borges' very influential preface to Casares' novel. This preface, as we recall, had caustically attacked the looseness and verbosity characteristic of psychological fiction. In order to counteract this lack of exactitude and strictness, Borges had invited authors and readers to look towards well-crafted novels and particularly to the tightly executed plot of detective fiction. Robbe-Grillet, in his review, remarks on the conspicuous merits of the detective genre which would answer the need in modern times for an artificially contrived and faultlessly designed plot. In fact, Robbe-Grillet realized that the detective story, as a structured artifice, satisfies many of the objectives and ideals of contemporary literature:

> Borges montre que bien au contraire la psychologie épuisée cède désormais le pas; c'est dans l'anecdote (souvent de caractère policier) qu'il nous faut chercher le contenu profond de ces ouvrages artificiels dont aucune partie ne souffre d'être sans justification.[27]

Borges' aesthetics of plot construction upholds the idea that the stringent rigor of the detective story plot can accommodate the dimension of the fantastic. As we specified in our model or prototext of the detective story, the genre demands that the fantastic element which is often imbricated in the mystery be finally neutralized. With Borges, however, the fantastic is not only introduced but maintained and never eradicated from the story. Using the structure of an investigation with its problem or secret and then incorporating into this formal frame actions and ideas incompatible with logic and order, Borges has created a plot which gives the impression of order and lucidity but the plot pattern also finds itself a carrier of the fantastic. The rigid structure of the detective story is very crucial to Borges since for him the fantastic signifies intellectual and metaphysical concepts which would be difficult to present in a narrative without the pattern of an investigation.

When we consider Borges' perception and treatment of the fantastic, we observe that the fantastic is not a subject or a theme but is intimately integrated within the arrangement of the plot. Consequently, the fantastic fulfills an integrant function in the investigative plot. Emir Rodriguez Monegal, who has freqently commented on the detective story and also on the fantastic tale, insists that the various types of the fantastic are " ... not just subjects but procedures used in the structuring of a plot. They belong to the formal and not to the thematic fabric of the story."[28] In the same manner that Borges has written one central essay, "El arte narrativo y la magia," on his aesthetics of plot construction and notion of "magical causality," two of his essays, "La flor de Coleridge" and "Magias parciales del Quijote," disclose quite limpidly his major types of the fantastic. If we had to outline the main areas of the fantastic in Borges, four principal types could be listed: 1) the inner duplication of a work of art inside another work of art, 2) dreams invading reality, 3) all aspects of time including regressions in time, infinity or circular time, and forking times, 4) the idea of the double.[29] All these four general categories of the fantastic, and this should be clearly understood, although sharply distinguishable as separate concepts, have a similar effect upon the plot — repetition. The fact that the effect is similar causes the types of the fantastic to appear to merge in one story. Furthermore, in a single story, there is usually more than one type of the fantastic interlinked with another type, for instance, in "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" and "La espera," the plot weaves all four types.

Although there are a number of studies exploring the fantastic in Borges' ficciones (and the fantastic generally as it appears in Spanish-American letters), very few critics have examined the detective plot structuring these tales.[30] One critic, however, has recognized that Borges' stories consist for the most part of the presentation of an enigma or mystery. Noé Jitrik designates this enigma as the "kernel" or structuring force responsible for the investigative pattern of the story:

> Il y a donc des degrés dans l'énigme, mais toujours énigme, qui joue un rôle de noyau structurant. Cette permanence de l'énigme naît précisément de la diversité des énigmes. ... dans les contes, il s'agit d'énigmes, non de simples définitions des énigmes; cela exige une incarnation, une dramatisation, cela exige que l'énigme soit racontée, ce qui produit un changement de plan: l'énigme en temps que noyau engendre une forme qui l'exprime et l'englobe; or, cette forme est l'enquête.[31]

Our study at hand will be one of the first to analyze the detective plot and its conjunction with the fantastic in Borges' fictions.

Just as the detective genre is traditionally categorized either as a tale of ratiocination or a hard-boiled adventure, Borges' stories likewise encompass in varying degree and fashion these divergent types of investigations. The nature of the investigation may range from the purely cerebral puzzle as in "La escritura del Dios" to the purely physical thriller as in "Emma Zunz." Most of Borges' stories manage to combine the decipherment of intellectual and metaphysical problems with the elements of violent pursuits and encounters that lead to dagger and gun fights or other manifestations of a duel. We begin our analysis of Borges' variations on the detective plot with his distinctly labelled 'detective stories' "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" and "La muerte y la brújula." [32] We shall then proceed to isolate and identify the two forms that control his plots — firstly, the intellectual enigma requiring a sedentary investigation, and secondly, the active search or adventure which culminates in a duel and death.

The apparently complex plot of the story "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" divides itself into two major sections. There is the outside plot or frame about the spy Yu Tsun who elaborates a plan and then carries out his mission. The outside story begins the narrative, is interrupted, and then is concluded in the last two paragraphs. This plot outline is only resumed after a long hiatus or omission and consequently, the reader must remain ignorant of the spy's actual plan until the end. The middle segment or "inlaid" pattern in the narrative contains another plot line or another riddle. [33] In this "embedded plot," we find the dialogue between the spy and a scholar named Stephen Albert who has spent his life absorbed in literary criticism in his decipherment of Ts'ui Pên's fictional masterpiece. [34] These two investigative plot lines — Yu Tsun's plan and search and Stephen Albert's research — converge, however, in many ways and at many points. The interpenetration of the two major plots is made overt by the very title of the text Stephen Albert deciphered — El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan. This is the title given as well to the spy's manuscript or to the narrative (and we may add, also the title of an entire collection of Borges' stories published in 1941 in which this story appears.) The heroes of the two independent investigative plots, Yu Tsun and his plan and Albert and his decipherment, become implicated in each others plots. Borges obviously found delight in crafting this overlapping of the two plot lines: "Voyez-vous aussi l'ironie? Albert a déchiffré une espèce de cryptogramme en comprenant le sens de l'oeuvre de Ts'ui Pên, et, à son tour, lui-même — c'est-à-dire, son nom — fait partie d'un autre cryptogramme."[35]

The outside narrative about Yu Tsun is immersed in the tradition of spy fiction. A spy story, in contrast to most detective stories, is reputed for its double or triple pursuits. In stories like John Buchan's The Thirty-nine Steps or John Le Carré's The Spy Who Came In From the Cold, there is a network of adventures where "a man hunts and in turn is hunted."[36] Yu Tsun is, in truth, a German spy who has devised a scheme to find and kill a man with the surname Albert, but at the same time, he is being chased by his opponent Captain Richard Madden. This interlocking system of pursuits — Madden chasing Yu Tsun and Yu Tsun tracking down Albert — demonstrates brilliantly an action typical of spy fiction. Yu Tsun, possessor of a secret, imagines a ruse which will enable him to communicate his message very openly through the newspaper. This tactic of hiding a secret in full view reminds one of the idea behind Poe's "The Purloined Letter."[37] At the end, we learn that the secret Yu Tsun wished to reveal was the name Albert — the name of the town to be bombed. By a strange irony of fate, he had to select the respected specialist of his late cousin's work. Before Yu Tsun shoots Albert, he listens to a very important discovery about his lost cousin's labyrinth. Listening to this fascinating decipherment caused Yu Tsun to lose a precious hour. Thus, Yu Tsun postpones the killing of Albert until the arrival of his pursuer Richard Madden. After the murder of Stephen Albert, Dr. Yu Tsun is apprehended and, while waiting for his own death in prison, writes his report about the two investigations—his own and Stephen Albert's.

The outer spy narrative envelops an inner story which is structured on the plot of a problem and search. This type of investigation is less fierce than the former but much more time-consuming. A researcher has devoted his entire life to the discovery of the secret plan behind Ts'ui Pên's book and labyrinth. After toiling at this heuristic task for years, Stephen Albert finally locates and deciphers a fragment of a letter written by Ts'ui Pên. While reading this fragment, Albert undergoes a moment of ecstatic illumination and understands that this new vision of time is the key to fathoming the puzzle:

> *Dejo a los varios porvenires* (*no a todos*) *mi jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*. Casi en el acto comprendi; *el jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* era la novela caótica; la frase *varios porvenires* (*no a todos*) me sugirió la imagen de la bifurcación en el tiempo, no en el espacio.[38]

From this fragment, Albert conjectures that Ts'ui Pên's overheard words had been misinterpreted and that he had not constructed two separate puzzles but that his book and labyrinth were one and the same. Beyond this recognition, the scholar or sub-detective had to imagine Ts'ui Pên's conception of time based not on the idea of an absolute extension in time but on the idea of an infinite system of simultaneous times that continually branch out. This original vision of infinite time with its forking and parallel times that encompass all possibilities in time manifests itself by the repetition of different versions of an action in Ts'ui Pên's literary work. Stephen Albert takes pleasure in apprehending how Ts'ui Pên's novel is indeed composed in the form of a riddle since the secret word, as in all riddles, has been omitted:

> Sé que de todos los problemas, ninguno lo inquietó y lo trabajó como el abismal problema del tiempo. Ahora bien, ése es el *único* problema que no figura en las páginas del *Jardín*. Ni siquiera usa la palabra que quiere decir *tiempo*. ... *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* es una enorme adivinanza, o parábola, cuyo tema es el tiempo; esa causa recóndita le prohibe la mención de su nombre.
> (pp. 478 - 479)

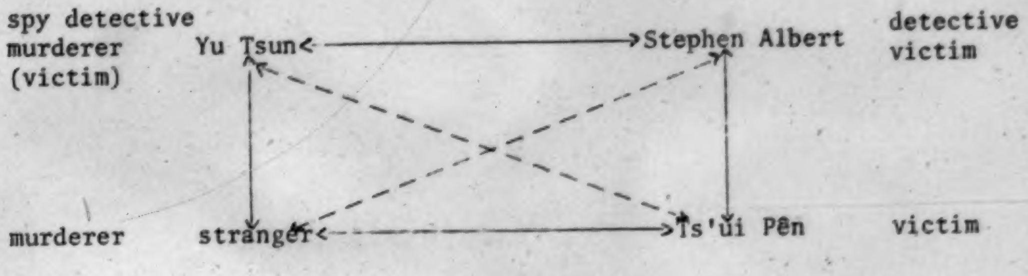
The story of Yu Tsun's murder and the story of Stephen Albert's philosophical and literary decipherment intersect at one point in the narrative. The possibility that these two spheres of action and these two individuals would ever merge was very remote. Yu Tsun's journey and murder of Stephen Albert is presented as one possibility of infinite bifurcating time, and in this particular instance, Yu Tsun is Stephen Albert's enemy: "El tiempo se bifurca perpetuamente hacia innumerables futuros. En uno de ellos soy su enemigo." (p. 479) In a modern self-reflexive text as this one, the encounter or duel of Yu Tsun and Stephen Albert is mirrored with subtle variations on many occasions within the narrative. Even before Yu Tsun enters Stephen Albert's house, he imagines the infinite labyrinth constructed by his cousin, who as it happens, had been murdered by a stranger: "Trece años dedicó a esas heterogéneas fatigas, pero la mano de un forastero lo asesinó y su novela era insensata y nadie encontró el laberinto." (p. 475) Hence, with Ts'ui Pên's death, there is a foreshadowing of the final murder — the decipherer of the labyrinth will meet the same fate as the builder of the labyrinth. Apart from this inner duplication, to explain the contradictory chapters of Ts'ui Pên's book, Stephen Albert exposes the idea of the multiple possibilities inherent in one action or one bifurcation in time by reference to the hypothetical action of Fang confronting an enemy. This example, as we should expect, is another inner parallel to the present visit of the stranger Yu Tsun to the garden of Stephen Albert. This supposition, however, reverses the roles of the stranger and the victim:

> De ahí las contradicciones de la novela. Fang, digamos, tiene un secreto; un desconocido llama a su puerta; Fang resuelve matarlo. Naturalmente, hay varios desenlaces posibles: Fang puede matar al intruso, el intruso puede matar a Fang, ambos pueden salvarse, ambos pueden morir, etcétera. En la obra de Ts'ui Pên, todos los desenlaces ocurren; cada uno es el punto de partida de otras bifurcaciones. Alguna vez, los senderos de ese laberinto convergen: por ejemplo, usted llega a esta casa, pero en uno de los pasados posibles usted es mi enemigo, en otro mi amigo. (p. 478)

Or again, while reading out loud two chapters of Ts'ui Pên's book, Yu Tsun is overwhelmed by the repetition of the same action of a duel that closes each chapter and prefigures his immediate intention: "Recuerdo las palabras finales, repetidas en cada redacción como un mandamiento secreto: Así combatieron los héroes, tranquilo el admirable corazón, violenta la espada, resignados a matar y a morir." (p. 478)

The infinite possibilities contained in one branching of time are made visible in the story through inner duplications. As Borges indicated in his essay defining one type of the fantastic, "Magias parciales del Quijote," when Hamlet is spectator of the play Hamlet and when Aeneas looks at a bas-relief depicting his future conquests, or in this story, when Yu Tsun reflects on Ts'ui Pên's death or on the duels in Ts'ui Pên's book or on Albert's hypothesis about Fang, there emerges, within the narrative, the dizzying repetition of similar actions, some 'real' and some 'unreal'.[39] The duels in Ts'ui Pên's novel or the conjectural references to Fang are not of the same nature as Ts'ui Pên's or Stephen Albert's violent murders or the eventual death of Yu Tsun on the gallows. In this narrative, Borges makes use of the inner duplication of the same action of real or unreal duels to elicit his vision of infinite time; likewise, in other stories as "La espera," the repetition of an identical plot of a duel is produced by means of dreams within dreams, or in "Tema del traidor y del héroe," the endless, cyclical repetition of an action is made evident through actual or invented Julius Caesar-like assassinations.

The repetition with slight variation of an action carries with it the idea of the interchangeability or the transferability of the opponents. With the action of a duel, the roles of the opponents can be reversed. Borges utilizes to advantage the concept of the double in this interchangeability between characters. The reversing of roles between adversaries is very evident, for instance, in the confusion that arises between the opponents Yu Tsun — a Chinese who is an English Professor employed as a German spy and Stephen Albert — an Englishman who is a specialist in Chinese culture and literature. We see here very clearly the symmetrical inversion between opponents. This symmetrical opposition or exchange is recognizable on other levels, for example, the role of the stranger who killed Ts'ui Pên is now assumed by the intruder Yu Tsun who shoots Stephen Albert. The interrelationship between the heroes of the narrative can be represented in diagrammatic form where we observe how each character is intertwined with or exchangeable with the other. We underscore the characters' roles as murderers, victims or detectives:



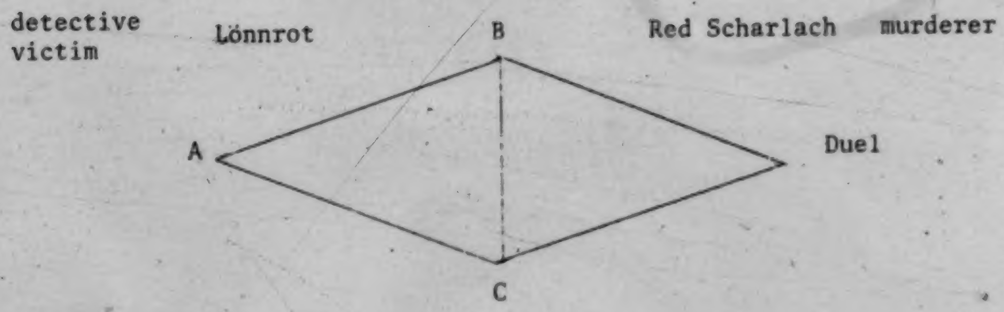
With the early narrative, "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," we can already consider how the realm of detection for Borges rests primarily on the *written Word* or the *Book* as medium of the secret or mystery. The characters' tasks are either to create or solve messages or riddles. The writers' Ts'ui Pên and Yu Tsun (using Albert's name as his secret), participate in composing recondite texts and the scholars or detectives Stephen Albert or the German and English police delve in literary exegeses to decode the riddle or message; for Albert, the clue to unravel Ts'ui Pên's book was the fragment of the letter and for the police, the clue was the newspaper headline. This activity of deciphering puzzles can also be seen to involve the 'outside' reader. There is the self-reflection of the process of detection where the characters engaged in decoding riddles inside the text mirror the reader's interpretation of Yu Tsun's fragment about the spy adventure and the scholarly research outside the text.

The enigma or the problem which requires elucidation in "La muerte y la brújula" is approached by the detective Erik Lönnrot in two ways. At the outset, the narrator characterizes Lönnrot as a pure reasoner or a Dupin figure and also as an adventurer or gambler.

Lönnrot investigates his case using two different methods that satisfy both his intellectual curiosity and his venturesome spirit. Corresponding to these two general methods — the 'immobile' and the 'mobile' investigation —, the short story presents: first, Lönnrot as an armchair detective deciphering esoteric texts, and second, Lönnrot as the adventurer journeying to the scene of the expected fourth crime.

In the first half of the narrative, Lönnrot scrutinizes arcane documents in his study in order to discover a Rabbi's murderer. Rather than remain with the mundane hypothesis that Rabbi Yarmolinsky had been killed by a thief, Lönnrot conjectures that the key to the murder mystery can be obtained through an examination of the Rabbi's books and the decipherment of his typewritten note with the cryptic words "_La primera letra del Nombre ha sido articulada_." (p. 500) [40] Two successive murders are committed in a very strange yet methodical and similar manner: each murder occurred at the same date each month in equidistance from each other and most of the clues left near the bodies were identical, for instance, the note about the second or third letter of the Name. This series of murders confirms the detective's conjecture. In the second half of the story, on the brink of a solution, Lönnrot aspires to verify his conjecture by travelling to villa Triste-le-Roy. He encounters the criminal Scharlach in the deserted house and learns that the search he conducted, albeit accurate, had been determined by a pre-arranged secret plan inspired by his method of investigation. Scharlach was prompted to devise this secret plan when he fortuitously learned about the detective's unusual approach in a journal article. The motive for Scharlach's plan of "tejer un laberinto en torno del hombre que había encarcelado a mi hermano" (p. 506) was revenge and in this revenge battle, at the level of the detective story proper, the victory of ensnarement goes to the murderer — the detective Lönnrot will die at the hand of his enemy.[41] From Scharlach's long explanation, Lönnrot apprehends that, behind the series of murders, there was a concealed strategy that led inexorably to his own death.

The roles of the opponents, the detective and the murderer, are exchangeable in "La muerte y la brújula." Traditionally, we have the detective's pursuit of a murderer or the murderer's independent plan to entrap his victim. However, in this short story, the murderer's machination depends entirely on the detective's investigative approach. (In this case, the detective and not the criminal proves to be the creative agent.) Red Scharlach perpetrated a series of crimes, some real, some imaginary, to enmesh the detective. The murderer's plan is omitted because of the narrative structure: in the first part, only the actions surrounding Lönnrot's investigation are depicted; in the second part, the re-interpretation of these same crimes are reviewed and explained by the murderer himself. Thus, this narrative is constructed according to two interrelated plots — the plot of the detective's investigation and the plot of the murderer's machination. These two plots are identical but inverted because of the roles of the opponents where, unknowingly, the detective Lönnrot precipitated the action which he himself investigates. The close relationship between opponents consists in the criminal's adoption of the same plan or design as determined by the detective. This transposition of analogous action suggests that each opponent is a mirror image, counterpart or double of the other. The connection between doubles is made sharply evident by the names of the antagonists — Lönnrot and Red Scharlach — , names that both signify red or blood.[42] The similar yet reversed relation between these two opponents creates a plot based on symmetry, repetition and inversion. The two main divisions of the story reflect yet contrast each other at every point. Also, these two plot patterns not only co-exist but interpenetrate and oppose each other during the unfolding of the narrative to coalesce into one same plot. In schematic form, we can illustrate how the two plots of the narrative can topple like a folding chair, one section completely upon the other. In other words, the plan of action of Scharlach is made to parallel in every respect the original plan of Lönnrot until they meet at the appointed center of the labyrinth:



It is very appropriate that the above configuration of the two plots should form the design of a diamond, a rhombus or a tetragram. This geometrical figure of a lozenge, or a short form of a labyrinth, is the structure of the text and is found duplicated inside the text — from the lozenge pattern in the windows, to the lozenge multi-colored print of the clown's suit, to the supremely more important configuration that draws the arrangement of the four murders and ultimately the mystery that Lönnrot was attempting to resolve, that is, the symbol or four letters that represent the Hebrew Name of God, the Tetragrammaton.[43] Detective Lönnrot, it should be remembered, was preoccupied only indirectly with the routine investigation of a murder. His primary objective was loftier; he was concerned with a metaphysical and theological problem. He believed that by studying and uncovering a metaphysical enigma or the Name of God he would thereby obtain ineluctably the name of the murderer: "el investigador Erik Lönnrot se había dedicado a estudiar los nombres de Dios para dar con el nombre del asesino." (p. 501) The pursuit of a theological problem was so absorbing that it persisted in overshadowing Lönnrot's pure detective work. In fact, when he greets the gangster Scharlach in the villa, his first words ironically are to inquire if Scharlach is also in search of the Secret Name: "Scharlach ¿usted busca el Nombre Secreto?" (p. 505)

Although Lönnrot, dedicated to metaphysical queries, is the victim of the revenge plot, he is nevertheless triumphant with his vision of infinite or circular time. Just before he is killed, he reminds Scharlach that because of circular time or the eternal return, there will be further periodic enactments of this duel scene. The notion of circular time is intuited in the narrative from the moment Lönnrot takes the train that will bring him to the villa. The villa, concrete image of infinite time, is a labyrinthine space with the endless symmetrical repetition of corridors, rooms, statues and mirrors. This immense construction, enveloped in an atmosphere of ominous silence and stillness where every object and movement appears hallucinatory, heightens the irreality of the last scene. Infinite time is also perceived by the weariness with which the two opponents perform the ritual act. Both seem struck by an overwhelming force or monstrous destiny or fatality that requires them to accomplish the act as though in a dream:

> [Scharlach] había participado en la breve lucha, apenas si alargó la mano para recibir el revólver de Lönnrot. Habló; Lönnrot oyó en su voz una fatigada victoria, un odio del tamaño del universo, una tristeza no menor que aquel odio. (p. 505)

Lönnrot, in his last speech, asks Scharlach to vary the death scene so that in his next reincarnation, the elaborate plot may be simplified. Instead of having his adversary weave an intricate plot, Lönnrot proposes that another more simple labyrinthine configuration of infinite and circular time would be Zeno's straight line:[44]

> ... Sintió un poco de frío y una tristeza impersonal, casi anónima. Ya era de noche; desde el polvoriento jardín subió el grito inútil de un pájaro. Lönnrot consideró por última vez el problema de las muertes simétricas y periódicas. ... Scharlach, cuando en otro avatar usted me dé caza ....
>
> — Para la otra vez que lo mate — replicó Scharlach — le prometo ese laberinto, que consta de una sola línea recta y que es invisible, incesante. (p. 507)

In his complex detective stories, "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" and "La muerte y la brújula," Borges has assembled a motley group — the international spy Yu Tsun, the armchair detectives Stephen Albert and Erik Lönnrot, the gangster murderer Red Scharlach. These detectives and murderers, as we noticed, were either engaged in the disentanglement of intellectual problems or embroiled in chases and violent crimes and duels. Consequently, in terms of the vocabulary of detective criticism, Borges' stories are patterned on the structure of the 'immobile' or 'mobile' investigation; that is, the classical detective story or 'tale of ratiocination' and also the hard-boiled thriller or spy fiction. Borges has aptly amalgamated the 'pure' puzzle story of a Baroness Orczy or Ellery Queen and the 'impure' thriller or American gangster film in the plots of his variations on the detective story. In combining the plots of an intellectual examination and a violent adventure, Borges has assigned to the character who has the role of detective in one plot (Albert and Lönnrot), the role of victim in the other. Whereas some of Borges' fictions, like his two reputed detective stories, unite the two types of investigative plots, other narratives give more emphasis either to the perplexing intellectual enigma or to the brutal dagger or gun fight. In order to look at each individual type of detective plot more closely, we shall discuss "La escritura del Dios," "El fin," and "La espera."

No better example could be given of a sedentary investigator than that of the prisoner Tzinacán in "La escritura del Dios" who, while sitting in the darkness of his cell, is exclusively devoted (he necessarily has to be) to the unravelling of a secret code.[45] This prisoner sub-detective is burdened with the metaphysical enigma of deciphering the magical sentence handed by God to humanity to explain His divine plan. After long hours of contemplation, Tzinacán conjectures that this sentence could be written on one of God's creatures, the jaguar confined in the adjacent cell. Thus, he will expend much labour and time in trying to arrange the spots on the jaguar to conform to a distinguishable configuration or sign. Tzinacán becomes less and less absorbed in the actual toil of finding and decoding the message on the jaguar and more and more enthralled in the idea of God as the writer of a secret message and the type of message this would be:

> No diré las fatigas de mi labor. Más de una vez grité a la bóveda que era imposible descifrar aquel texto. Gradualmente, el enigma concreto que me atareaba me inquietó menos que el enigma genérico de una sentencia escrita por un dios. ¿Qué tipo de sentencia (me pregunté) construirá una mente absoluta? (p. 597)

Hence, ensconced in his meditation, Tzinacán has, in a dream within a dream, a moment of ecstacy where the radiance and light impress upon him God's secret plan. (Similar revelations are glimpsed by the hero or Borges himself in the stories "El Zahir" and "El Aleph.") A personal experience of such a rapturous vision, where time and individual identity are abolished, is acknowledged by Borges in his confidential essay "Sentirse en muerte."[46] In this story, as in many others, Borges uses to great effect the symbolism of darkness and light. The darkness penetrates the jail cell before and after the visionary experience, while brightness and illumination manifest the experience itself. The imagery of darkness and light concurs well with the process of detection — darkness symbolizes ignorance and fear and light the clarification of the enigma.[47]

The intellectual puzzle for Borges appears to be always related to a concrete decipherment of writing. Tzinacán, for instance, was involved in the task of reading the magical sentence imprinted on the jaguar. We also saw how Lönnrot was intrigued about the typewritten note concerning the name of God and tried to decipher this secret Name or how Albert had to correctly read the fragment of the letter to explain the secret plan of Ts'ui Pên's book. We could argue that the sedentary investigators in Borges' fiction very often approach their task of decipherment through the act of reading and that a cryptic script holds the key to the puzzle. This image of the detective as indefatigable reader is ideally portrayed in Borges' "Kafkian story" "La biblioteca de Babel."[48] All the librarians, entrusted with the arduous and impossible project of exploring the interminable hexagons of the library in search of the secret Book of books, are described as "descifrador ambulante," "viajeros" and "buscadores oficiales, . inquisidores."[49] Borges' powerful metaphor of the universe as a Library leads one to envisage the detective as "[e]l hombre, el imperfecto bibliotecario" (p. 466) and unfaultering decoder or reader of unresolvable mysteries and metaphysical perplexities. Borges, as a 'real' librarian with the other fictitious readers or detectives in the 'biblioteca de Babel,' was unable to locate the secret key or Word in this library, nonetheless he found comfort in his idea of infinite or circular time. However hopeless the enterprise of the librarians, the narrator feels assured that because of infinite time, the disorder of the library will eventually be repeated to create an order — the Order.

The investigators in the library, as most of the readers or detectives in other stories, discover that the prodigious problem under scrutiny focusses ultimately, in one way or another, on some aspect of infinite and cyclical time as in "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," "La muerte y la brújula," "Tema del traidor y del héroe" or "Los teólogos" or on other facets of this circular time as the abolishment of time in a visionary experience as in "La escritura del Dios" or "El Aleph," the idea that time can stop as in "El milagro secreto," or regression in time as in "El inmortal," "La otra muerte" or "Las ruinas circulares."

Apart from being readers, Albert and Lönnrot are also, through unfortunate circumstances, opponents in a duel, in this case the victims. We studied "La escritura del Dios" because it is an uncomplicated story principally about an intellectual decipherment and in the same way, let us now consider two narratives that are starkly reduced to the plot action of a duel. In one story, "El fin," Borges has depicted opponents that are gauchos and in another, "La espera," the enemies are gangsters. In these plots which concern the relation between murderer and victim, the classic detective story pattern of mystery and investigation has been reversed. These "inverted detective stories" center on the murderer and his machination, that is, the fabula or first story, rather than on the detective and his investigation, or the sjužet or second story.[50]

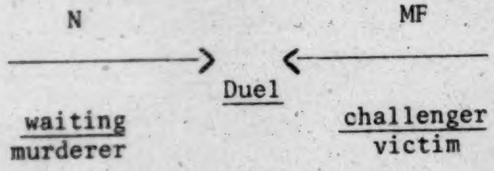
The plot structure of a duel, either as dagger fight or gun fight, simultaneously conjoins two opponents in two distinct actions: the killer searching and challenging his prey and the victim waiting helplessly. Thus, a duel is a plot pattern that contains within itself two complementary actions or movements. From the final open combat, only one opponent will emerge victorious. The strategy of the duel indubitably signifies a life and death conflict of a murderer and a victim. Claude Brémond's model, founded on the principle of the polarization of action, applies very well to plots which engage opponents in duels. In a duel, we perceive how the adversary who manoeuvres to enmesh the other forces his enemy into a hopeless situation. This means that the success of one opponent brings about the annihilation of the other. Using Brémond's terminology, the murderer and the victim implicated in the action of ensnarement can be considered l'agent and le patient, where, at the same time, the murderer is in a position of amélioration thereby causing the victim to be in a position of dégradation.

Apart from its affinity with the pattern of an 'inverted detective story' or the story of a murder, the action of opponents waging a duel is also the focal point or scene in the western or gaucho story and the gangster or spy story, or again, the western and gangster movie.[51] We can think of such famous shoot-out scenes in westerns as Stagecoach (1939), My Darling Clementine (1946), High Noon (1952) and Shane (1953) or the gun-fight in such early gangster movies as Little Caesar (1930), The Public Enemy (1931), Scarface (1932), and in such later versions as On the Waterfront (1954), Bonnie and Clyde (1967), or The Godfather (1972). For instance, can we imagine a western or gangster movie without its archetypal scene — the ubiquitous gun-fight — where a Gary Cooper, John Wayne or Clint Eastwood crush the villain or where a Edward G. Robinson, James Cagney or Burt Lancaster pursue or hide from the enemy.[52] For his part, Borges speaks of his personal admiration of "Josef von Sternberg's unforgettable gangster films" where in the final scene George Bancroft always surprises his opponent at gunpoint:[53]

> [il] adore et idéalise les images populaires du courage illicite ... le gaucho, le compadre de 1900, l'héroïque gangster nord-américain de la belle époque. ... Il me parla avec admiration des premiers films de gangsters de Josef von Sternberg, uniques en leur genre d'après Borges, et me montra comment à la fin de ceux-ci George Bancroft montait l'escalier, revolver en main, pour tuer son crapuleux rival.[54]

To be sure, as the critic Donald Yates notes, "the intricately plotted and controlled dramatic situation" that transpires in Borges' tales derives from the author's fondness for formulaic literature: "his passion for fantasy and detective fiction, for gangster films, tales of guapos ... has influenced the narrative structure of virtually all his prose fiction."[55]

The movement of the action in "El fin" underlines the bipolar nature of the duel and can be easily outlined step by step or in diagram form: 1) the Negro's waiting at the inn, 2) the approach of the stranger Martin Fierro, 3) the meeting and dialogue of the two men at the inn, 4) the displacement of the two opponents to a point on the plain, 5) the actual dagger fight, 6) one opponent's death and the other's weary and downtrodden return to the inn.[56]



The story presents only the Negro's last afternoon of waiting, but in truth, he had been waiting for this duel a very long time: " — Me estoy acostumbrando a esperar. He esperado siete años." (p. 520)[57] Before the enemies engage in a duel, the reader learns from their final words the motive behind their encounter — Martin Fierro had previously killed the Negro's brother. (This revenge of a brother's death was also the reason for Scharlach's killing of Lönnrot.) Martin Fierro and the Negro speak about their reluctant yet compelling need to fight the other. Both men seem forced by powers beyond their control to accomplish this deed: "Mi destino ha querido que yo matara y ahora, otra vez, me pone el cuchillo en la mano." (p. 520, we underline) The Negro or the waiting opponent is victorious in this particular combat, nevertheless, when he leaves the fatally wounded opponent on the plain, he feels that his own purpose and life has come to an end. The enemies are determined by this action of the duel and when one dies, it is as if the other had also died. The observer of the duel, Recabarren, reflects on the Negro's abashment following the fight. At the close of the narrative, the reader is left to imagine the Negro still strumming his guitar while waiting for Martin Fierro's sons or brothers to come and revenge the murder. We can intuit how this action or the duel will perpetrate itself endlessly.

"El fin" contains a relatively long passage about the plain where the duel will occur. Beginning with the description of the plain in the moonlight, the style and tone of the gaucho story abruptly changes. The plain, the space of the impending crime, is depicted as an abstract, hallucinatory setting or "lieu du destin." [58]

> La llanura, bajo el último sol, era casi abstracta, como vista en un sueño. ... Se alejaron un trecho de las casas, caminando a la par. Un lugar de la llanura era igual a otro y la luna resplandecía. ... Hay una hora de la tarde en que la llanura está por decir algo; nunca lo dice o tal vez lo dice infinitamente y no lo entendemos, o lo entendemos pero es intraducible como una música... . (pp. 519, 520, 521)

This type of dream-like setting is a constant feature of the duel scene; it serves to combine the unreality of the fantastic with the violence and stark reality of the gaucho story. For Borges, the duel unfolds in a labyrinthine space, either a complicated architectural edifice or a vast deserted plain; in geometrical terms the complex villa as opposed to the straight line, ("La muerte y la brújula"), or in parabolic terms, the palace as opposed to the desert. ("Los dos reyes y los dos laberintos")[59] At the center of this labyrinth, there is the ritual duel and ultimate death of one opponent — be it Stephen Albert, Lönnrot, Martin Fierro, Villari, Dahlmann, Asterión ... . In his use of these spaces which convey a dream-like atmosphere, Borges' loci in quo can be compared with the eerie nightmarish settings of Poe. Indeed, Borges has described Poe's inimitable settings as the most powerful and poetic element in his stories.[60] These ominous settings impart to Poe's narratives the mystery of an other-worldliness.

The description of the space of the duel which causes a break in the narrative announces that the duel action comprises implications and meanings other than the personal ethics of courage and undauntedness of the gaucho or man of the pampa. The labyrinthine space of the duel is not only significant as the particular architectural or geographical location of the duel, but as we have previously explained, the labyrinth is symbol or metaphor for Borges' vision of infinite time and the eternal repetition of events in time first set forth in "Sentirse en muerte."[61] The duel action occurs in a moment outside of time, that is, in a moment of ritual or mythical time. Within this sphere of infinite time, the action of the duel will be repeated periodically by the opponents. It is this endlessness of time or repetition in time that explains very well the 'infinite weariness' of the enemies as they prepare 'once more' to clash their knives or daggers together. Martin Fierro and the Negro, like other opponents, know that the specific duel on the plain is to be re-enacted perpetually. Also, because of this idea of infinite time, when the opponents stand one in front of the other as doubles, they are aware of their lack of personal identity. The conclusion in "El fin," as the famous passage in "La forma de la espada," is one of the clearest expressions of the interchangeability of the doubles or of their dissolution into anonymity: "Cumplida su tarea de justiciero, ahora era nadie. Mejor dicho era el otro: no tenía destino sobre la tierra y había matado a un hombre." (p. 521) In many of Borges' stories, this anonymity is brutally made visible by the frequent use of the verb 'obliterate' ("deshiciera") to designate the total annihilation of the opponent.

Before we proceed to an analysis of the pattern of the duel in the context of a gangster milieu, an interesting distinction between two types of duel stories should be made. In a story like "El fin" or "La muerte y la brújula," the duel was prompted by revenge. On the other hand, in "El Sur," the dagger fight between the old gaucho and Dahlmann was not premeditated. Borges' contrast between the motiveless or "disinterested" duel and the premeditated duel is very enlightening and this contrast brings to the fore the roles of destiny and chance.[62] In a disinterested duel, the element of chance intrudes into a hero's death or moment of destiny. In summary, the gun-fight is anticipated and planned meticulously in narratives as "Emma Zunz," "El muerto" or "La espera" but the duel is unanticipated by the opponents in "Hombre de la esquina rosada," "El desafío" or "El Sur."[63]

The critic of popular films, Stuart Kaminsky, informs us that the gangster code stipulates that there is no escape for anyone who has fallen into activities of the underworld: "This attempt, always futile, to hide, escape the gang and one's destiny, is repeated constantly in gangster films."[64] The dramatic situation of a criminal hiding and waiting to be killed by his gangster opponent is the topic of Borges' story "La espera." (In this state of seclusion and waiting, Ole Andreson of Hemingway's "The Killers" is very comparable to Villari.)[65] The action of "La espera" focusses almost entirely on the 'inaction' of waiting. The hero's consolation while waiting for death is to live solely in the present: finding enjoyment in the little pleasures life can afford — beams of light flooding the patio, drinking brimming cups of maté, reading about the waiting souls in La Divina Commedia and viewing gangster movies. One fine morning, the gangster leader and his attendants enter the victim's room and shoot him down before he can pull out his own gun from the drawer. We could illustrate this cold-blooded murder in schematic form:

V ←———————— V
Duel

waiting figure — gangster challenger
victim — murderer

The gun-fight between the opponents (Villari - Villari) is re-echoed throughout the narrative to suggest the endless repetition of this action. It surfaces in the inner duplication of the gangster films. A gangster waiting to be killed is spectator of movies that mirror his own world of crime. The action of a duel is also constantly reappearing in the hero's dreams. Villari, shattered by the fear of his enemy, dreams at dawn an identical yet slightly modified dream about his adversary and the different possibilities or ways of being tracked down, either in his room, on the patio, or in the theatre:

> En los amaneceres soñaba un sueño de fondo igual y de circunstancias variables. Dos hombres y Villari entraban con revólveres en la pieza o lo agredían al salir del cinematógrafo o eran, los tres a un tiempo, el desconocido que lo había empujado, o lo esperaban tristemente en el patio y parecían no conocerlo. (p. 610)

Villari also conjectures that his enemy may have been killed by another gangster and thereby causing him to wait in vain infinitely. In the end, with the arrival of the enemy, the victim cannot distinguish the 'unreal' duels of his dreams from the imminent 'real' duel. With this inner duplication of movies and dreams or the blurring of the real and unreal and the convergence of doubles, Borges has created, from the formulaic action of a gangster story, a unique fantastic tale.

The plot of "La espera" restricts itself almost entirely to the waiting adversary's inaction or with reference to Brémond's dichotomy — the narrative is concerned with le patient and not l'actant. The waiting opponent in this story becomes the victim but this is not always to be expected. As we know, "El fin" considered both the waiting enemy and then the avenger before the duel but it was the avenger who died. The fact that the waiting hero is sometimes victim and sometimes victorious supports the idea that a plot action — in this case the duel — is open to endless possibilities (the Fang hypothesis).

The strategy of waiting is prominent in many stories: Borges as character waits and dreams in "Episodio del enemigo," and a character like Pedro Salvadores hides in an underground cellar, or Asterión waits in his house, or Ibn Hakkan, inspired by a dream of a spider's web, builds a red labyrinth on the cliffs of Cornwall to hide and entrap his victim.[66] A few modern authors, in their experimentations with the plot structure of detective fiction, have resorted to the pattern of one opponent waiting for the other. For instance, the detective Mathaï in Dürrenmatt's Das Versprechen, adopting the procedure of fishing, prepares a scenario of waiting as bait that is certain to entice and catch the criminal. And the criminal in Hubert Aquin's Prochain épisode finds it ingenious to ambush his proposed victim by lying in wait in his own home rather than undertake a long adventure or search:

> ... j'ai littéralement pulvérisé les théories les plus savantes qu'on peut édifier pour empiéger un fugitif qui se meut à l'intérieur d'une circonférence réduite. ... Moi j'attends H. de Heutz assis dans ce fauteuil Louis XV ... H. de Heutz me cherche, moi je l'attends. J'ai plus de chances de le rencontrer ici que lui de m'apercevoir sur un banc de la place Simon-Goulart. Je savoure ma position.[67]

The plot arrangement of opponents and their eventual duel or combat is a structure of opposition and conflict distinctly perceptible in many of Borges' stories. However, if one were to inquire about the duel action that figures in "La forma de la espada," "Los teólogos," or "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," to name only a few dramatic tales, most readers would hesitate before confirming the fact that there is the pattern of a combat in these narratives. Borges adheres to only a handful of plot patterns and these are forever being repeated with slight variations. In order to vary the basic duel plot of a murderer and victim, we can discern three general approaches utilized by Borges: 1) changing the position of the duel in a story, 2) differing the nature of the duel, 3) altering the narrative viewpoint from which the story is told.

Very generally, we can observe that in a Borges narrative the duel is either positioned in the foreground or in the background. Stories as "El fin" or "La espera," where all events concentrate on the climactic duel, may be said to have the duel action in the foreground. Conversely, the duel may be briefly described, simply mentioned or even omitted within the framework of the story itself as in "La forma de la espada" or "Hombre de la esquina rosada." We may speak of these duels as being in the background. In short, this foregrounding or backgrounding of the duel means that the action of the conflict will be much more evident in a story like "El fin" than in a story like "La forma de la espada" where there is only an allusion to a duel. We can also note that in stories as "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" which have complex double plots — one plot about the investigation and the other about the crime — the action of a duel often goes unnoticed and therefore readers and critics do not relate it to other stories about duels.

Varying the nature of the duel is another way of changing the presentation of this plot pattern. The duel may be set in a variety of circumstances and its nature may range from the theological problem and the mythical act to the historical or political event and to, as discussed above, the gaucho and gangster fight. In "Los teólogos," the narrator states that there is a secret controversy "batalla secreta" or a "duelo ... invisible" between the two philosophers Aureliano and Juan de Panonia. (p. 552) The duel may also be represented in its mythical ambiance with the adventurer Theseus slaying the minotaur in the labyrinth. The duel may take the form of a waiting for a dictator's banishment, a condemnation to death, or an assassination if situated in a historical and political context. This is the dimension given to the waiting or death scenes in "Pedro Salvadores," "El milagro secreto," "Deutsches Requiem," and "Tema del traidor y del héroe." Or, of course, the duel may take the shape of a gaucho dagger fight or gangster gun-fight. Even in these more straightforward stories, the action is violent but also cerebral. For instance, this confluence is well synthesized in the gaucho story "El encuentro" where the narrator, who had feared that the knife fight would be a bloody deed, is surprised to discover that its moves are as precise and clear as a chess game: "Yo había previsto la pelea como un caos de acero, pero pude seguirla, o casi seguirla, como si fuera un ajedrez." (p. 1041)

There is still a third way of altering the duel plot. The duel action will be different if it is witnessed by a little boy as in "El encuentro" or by a paralyzed man on a cot as in "El fin" or if it is reported directly to us by the murderer himself, as Theseus in the last line of "La casa de Asterión." Often the story is told from the perspective of an omniscient narrator who is puzzled by certain aspects of the action. For example, in "El fin," the action is narrated by an omniscient selective voice examining Recabarren looking alternatively at the Negro and Martin Fierro. With "La espera," the omniscient viewpoint remains positioned on the waiting victim in his room and only catches sight of the murderer at the moment of the duel. In a story like "Emma Zunz," which reverses the action of "La espera," the omniscient selective viewpoint follows the murderer as she puts her plan into effect. Apart from omniscient viewpoints that select to focus on the murderer and/or the victim, there are many first person accounts of the duel: of the murderer as in "Hombre de la esquina rosada," or "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," or even direct monologues of the victim as in "La casa de Asterión." This interesting question of point of view, a very effective method of changing the detective plot pattern, will be the subject of our next chapter.

* * *

CHAPTER FOUR

"Flambeau would then proceed to tell the story from the inside; and even from the inside it was odd. Seen from the outside it was perfectly incomprehensible, and it is from the outside that the stranger must study it."

G. K. Chesterton

MURDERERS AS NARRATORS: NABOKOV

Traditional Narrators in Detective Fiction

Apart from the variations operated on the plot structure, as our foregoing chapter discussed, the 'second best method' of transforming the detective story is through the choice of narrator. Detective stories, even more so than other fictional works, are very dependent on the strategy used in narrating the events. The narrative voice is in full control of the mystery. Indeed, the art of the narrator as source, organizer, and commentator of the detective's exploits, is responsible for the maintaining and confounding of the mystery until the dénouement. For instance, should the more traditional narrative viewpoints be adopted— the first person friend or neutral observer, the selective omniscient voice, or again the investigator himself being given the opportunity to tell his story directly —then an identical plot structure would offer, through a shift of voice and perspective, a very different approach to the perception and disentanglement of the enigma. The narrative speaker and position in a detective story must always work in concert with the pattern of the mystery and investigation. In other words, an author must bear in mind, simultaneously, the construction and main line of his plot and the narrative stance from which this plot action is perceived, or as Nabokov in The Gift reminds us: "At the same time he [the author] had to take great pains not to lose either his control of the game, or the viewpoint of the plaything." [1]

One of the first and better illustrations of how the question of narrative voice and viewpoint is decisive in producing a very tangible difference in the detective tale can be easily apprehended in the stories of the originator and consummate craftsman of the genre. Poe's three accepted detective tales first indicate the versatility of the plot pattern — from the problem of the locked-room, to the close interpretation of factual data, to the paradox of the most obvious solution — while retaining the same narrator, namely the anonymous friend who relates Dupin's method and discoveries. This narrative technique proved very appropriate for demonstrating the brilliance and superiority of the detective and lent itself well to the withholding of important clues. Poe also discerned that the detective story could be reshaped by changing not only the plot but the narrative viewpoint. As a result, Poe composed another story "Thou Art the Man" (1844) which is narrated by the detective himself without the interference of a bystander friend. In this story, it would be as though Dupin himself told us, at first hand, the procedure of his investigation without having recourse to the filter of another mind. In fact, because of this remarkable shift in perspective and narrative voice, "Thou Art the Man" was not officially recognized as one of Poe's veritable detective stories.

The classic mode of retelling the story of the investigation using a first person observer as narrator is very recurrent in detective fiction; in truth, this technique is so recurrent that it has become synonymous with the genre. This narrative viewpoint, with its intellectual distance between the observer-narrator and the central character, has many advantages. It is quite evident that in view of his outside position, this narrator is ignorant of many of the detective's private musings and suspicions and even of secret journeys and searches. Compared to the detective himself, it is impossible for the bystander-narrator to be in full possession of all the facts: he is never completely brought into the detective's confidence and he cannot fully analyze the clues and information obtained from the detective's dialogues. In short, the ignorance and bewilderment of the narrator, relating a story that he does not entirely grasp, not only serves to intensify the mystery but also to enhance the superior stature of the detective hero. The observer-narrator's inferior intellectual position can be characterized by adverting to Todorov's scale of knowledge where the narrator knows more or less than the character or by Genette's dichotomy between who is speaking and who is seeing. In the detective story's usual mode of narration, the observer-narrator is always in a position to know less than the main character and his voice or speech never completely merges with the superior vision of the detective. However, because of this inferior degree of knowledge between the narrator and character, in this type of detective story, a close relationship or bond of empathy is created between the narrator and the reader. The reader of a detective story identifies with the bystander-narrator since he must also struggle on the periphery. The reader appreciates the fact that there appears to be less subterfuge in this narrative mode since the narrator's limited knowledge gives the impression of reliability. Thus, the narrator's bafflement and ignorance projects a sense of credibility.

The effectiveness of having a first person observer retell the story of the detective's decipherment is certified by its long fortune in the history of the genre. The author of the Sherlock Holmes stories, for instance, rarely experimented with narrative viewpoint and chose most often to adopt Poe's expedient mode of a friend-narrator. The only innovation that Doyle brought to the 'Watson type narrator' was to make the companion less anonymous and to grant him a role as minor participant in the story. Even though this narrative technique is very pervasive in detective fiction, it is conspicuously rare in mainstream literature. The only other tradition that finds it necessary to use an exterior perspective is fantastic fiction.[2] It may be mentioned in passing that the narrative viewpoint of a bystander is found in many of Poe's fantastic stories like "The Fall of the House of Usher." We may even argue that Poe transposed this narrative mode from the fantastic tale to the detective story. With respect to genres or traditions other than the detective story or the fantastic tale,. there are very few examples of novels narrated from this viewpoint. It is interesting to note that the titles that come to mind — Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov, Conrad's Heart of Darkness, Henry James' The Turn of the Screw, Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby — are all in some way related to a crime or mysterious incident in need of clarification by an outsider. In fact, all the narrators in these novels are in the situation of a Watson, that is, they are observing and recounting another person's story where the entire discourse is aimed at an understanding of this first story, the fabula, or the mystery.[3]

It was not until the rise of thrillers and hard-boiled fiction that another narrative technique became particularly connected with the detective genre. In asking the detective himself to reveal his exploits as Poe had done in "Thou Art the Man," writers like Hammett and Chandler delved more deeply into the complexities of the narrator in detective fiction. With the Watson type narrator, it was relatively easy for an author to conceal evidence and then, in the resolution, to display the superior acumen of the detective. However, when the detective is permitted to recite the tale of his own investigation, he finds himself in a very equivocal position; how can he manage to hide secrets and discoveries? Indeed, it is difficult for the reader of a first person detective narrative to account for the reticences and the silences of the narrator. The reader knows very well that the narrator is purposely being unreliable while trying to arrest the disclosure of the solution until the most propitious moment. The problem of unreliability looms behind his every speech and action. Hence, when the detective is narrator, the dominant problem in his retelling of the story of the crime is made very visible— how can the detective hide secrets about the investigation and yet disclose enough information so that the narrative will progress.

In order to rectify this problem of the unreliability of the detective as narrator, writers like Hammett and Chandler instituted a very objective perspective from which only the detective's exterior actions would be recorded. This use of an unintrusive or impersonal narrator was an attempt to correct the problem of unreliability by refraining from entering the mind of the narrator and divulging his thought processes and deductions. The response by modern authors to this exclusive description of exterior action was very positive. Many influential writers of the twentieth century, from Hemingway to Robbe-Grillet, experimented with this absolute objective mode of narration. Whenever this objective type of narrative viewpoint is found in modern novels, it always conveys an additional sense of mystery. The objective camera-like narrator of a Hemingway, for instance, who reports only exterior actions, prompts the reader to inquire further about the motives and reasons that precipitated these actions. Thus, this unintrusive narrative technique is designed to call attention indirectly to the mystery behind the objects and actions described. Consequently, Hammett and Chandler, in their attempt to create an objective perspective, eliminated the problem of the unreliable narrator and also discovered a narrative technique which could, in itself, engender more mystery. We should note, at this time, that the critic Booth, in his exposition of the problematic unreliable narrator, did not open for discussion the subject of the objective camera-like narrator who annuls the very idea of reliability and unreliability in a narrative.

Every theorist of narrative viewpoint, from Pouillon, Friedman, Stanzel to Genette, has inevitably alluded to the two traditional techniques particularly associated with the detective genre. Friedman, to illustrate, presents his category of the "first person witness" by making reference to the Watson narrator and exemplifies his classification of the "dramatic mode" by resorting to the narrators Sam Spade or Nick Beaumont.[4] In the same manner, Gérard Genette,in his excellent analysis of the 'discours du récit,' will state that the best example of the observer-narrator is to be found in detective fiction: "le plus illustre et le plus typique, le transparent (mais indiscret) Dr. Watson de Conan Doyle." [5] In Genette's description of "la focalisation externe," he explains at lenght how the thriller stories of Hammett are outstanding in their objective portrayal of a character's actions: "les romans de Dashiel Hammett, où le héros agit devant nous sans que nous soyons jamais admis à connaître ses pensées ou sentiments, et par certaines nouvelles d'Hemingway, comme "The Killers" ... qui pousse la discrétion jusqu'à la devinette." [6] Theorists of narrative perspective find these two distinctive modes of the witness-narrator and the 'objective' narrator in purer form in detective fiction. On the other hand, specialists of the detective genre have never broached the question of narrative viewpoint which is so instrumental to the genre and which has also had noteworthy repercussions on literature in general. The only two exceptions would be Dorothy Sayers and her early examination of the four levels of confidentiality in one novel which extend from viewing the detective's external actions to a "close intimacy with the detective" at the end.[7] And the critic Robert Champigny discusses, in his recent book on the hermeneutic text, the primary viewpoint before and after the dénouement.[8]

In the preceding overview of the two major traditional viewpoints in detective fiction, we often referred to the relation between narrator and character or narrator and reader. All these relations, along with the connection between narrator and author or character and reader are central concepts at the heart of any analysis of narration — "Ce sont les rapports entre: auteur implicite, narrateur, personnages et lecteur implicite qui définissent, dans leur variété, la problématique de la vision."[9] The relation between the 'implied author,' to use Booth's term, and the narrator in a detective story is very fundamental. The rules of the genre make it absolutely impermissible for the narrator to be reliable until the resolution. We call the narrator's obligation to be unreliable as a temporary unreliability. Given the necessary 'temporary unreliability' of the narrator, it is very crucial that the reader be given some guarantee of the existence of an authorial voice controlling and directing the story. Should the narrator, in a detective story, be left at his own task without the intervening voice of the implied author, there would be no way of assuring the reader that the text will not remain in the realm of the ambiguous or of the impossible. An overriding authorial voice, or in Champigny's words an author's "free comments," ensures that the ambiguity and the impossible will be resolved but only at the appropriate bend in the narrative.[10] To define this very delicate function of the implied author, we could consider the useful idea formulated by Leonid Grossman and Mikhail Bakhtin of a basic "monological voice," that is, the presence of a master voice that corrects and subordinates all other voices allowed to speak in a narrative.[11] In other words, this 'primary monologism' means that the narrator's voice is controlled at all points and this, of course, concords with the principal poetics of the genre. Moreover, this overriding authorial voice has to blend and merge with the plot and at no time can the implied author exploit his privileged position by interfering or dropping uncalculated remarks in the text. If the implied author should overpower the narrator's voice in the detective story, the reader would be very justified in crying 'foul play!'[12]

The traditional modes of narration, in summary, always focus on the major character or the detective. Even in the case of an author like Chesterton who chooses an omniscient selective viewpoint, the center of attention remains fixed on the detective. Therefore, whatever narrative perspective is adopted, the story is engaged in describing the detective's investigation or the second story. But as we know from our prototext, two main protagonists are implicated in the action of the detective story — the murderer and the detective; hence, the murderer should also be given a chance to tell his story. Although very few detective stories as well as modern literary works let the criminal transmit his own story, it is nevertheless an option that is integrant to the genre. In the traditional detective story, it was only in the dénouement that one could find a final confession by the murderer himself whereupon he would confirm the detective's hypothesis. However, until the writings of an Anthony Berkeley or an Agatha Christie, it had not been imagined that an entire detective story could be told from the perspective of the murderer.

In an Anthony Berkeley novel like Malice Aforethought, the primary narrative viewpoint rests on the murderer and his plans and actions, or to repeat Chesterton's words, the novel tells the "inside story" of the crime. The first sentence of this narrative immediately plunges the reader into the intricate world of the murderer's machinations: "It was not until several weeks after he had decided to murder his wife that Dr. Bickleigh took any active steps in the matter." [13] Although critics appraise Agatha Christie's novel The Murder of Roger Ackroyd as very innovative with respect to narrative technique, many readers remain unaware of the fact that she deftly united the traditional bystander-narrator with the experimental. In this novel, the first person narrator, Dr. Sheppard, assumes the role of a Hastings and retells the "outside story" of Poirot's investigations. Even Poirot notices Dr. Sheppard's constant presence as dutiful companion: "You must have indeed been sent from the good God to replace my friend Hastings, ... I observe that you do not quit my side." [14] At the end of his impartial account, the bystander-narrator tears off his mask and reveals that he is the murderer. This concealment of the narrator's true identity throughout the narrative and the unexpected revelation has caused Christie's novel to become famous precisely for the narrator's ability to transform himself like a chameleon. Before Christie's tour de force, it was taken for granted that the suspects of a crime in a narrative were restricted to the list of characters; the author set an unprecedented record by permitting an objective narrator to be incriminated. With the concealed narrator and his subsequent metamorphosis, transformations are no longer possible only at the level of the plot and characters where the detective becomes the murderer such as in "Thou Art the Man," *The Big Bow Mystery* or *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune*; metamorphoses can also occur at the level of the narrator where an objective figure like Hastings or Watson could turn out to be the murderer. A further example of a concealed narrator is clearly evinced in Boileau-Narcejac's *Les Diaboliques*. The central perspective of Ravinel changes from potential murderer in the opening pages to intended victim at the close of the narrative.[15] In short, a narrator who conceals his identity exposes an unstable order of narration and creates additional opportunities for mystery.

The discovery that a narrator could be, like the characters, a source of disguise, deceit, and deep mistrust had formidable consequences in detective fiction. The narrator must be 'temporarily unreliable' for the prolongation of the story but it is not expected that he be unreliable and untruthful about his own personal identity. Well understood, this idea of the personal concealment and metamorphosis of the narrator offers modern literature a dramatic way of adding mystery and ambiguity to a narrative. Dr. Sheppard, in Christie's novel, very astutely baffled his readers because of his expertise in hiding his identity as murderer. The reader's expectations prevented him from deciphering the mystery: the customary procedure in detective fiction had been to hide the criminal under the figure of a character, not a narrator. As Roland Barthes explained, the reader does not expect to find the murderer speaking or masked under the cloak of a first person

narrator: "Le lecteur cherchait l'assassin derrière tous les 'il' de l'intrigue: il était sous le 'je.' Agatha Christie savait parfaitement que dans le roman, d'ordinaire, le 'je' est témoin, c'est le 'il' qui est acteur." [16]

The technique of having a concealed narrator withhold or change his identity in the course of a narrative leads the reader to apprehend a new relation between narrator and character — a relation that is unstable and vacillating, or in the words of Genette, "variable et flottante." [17] In the presence of a concealed narrator, the reader's first question is indubitably to ask — who is the speaker or to whom belongs this voice? Apart from the concealed narrator's unstable relation with other characters, a second question should preoccupy the reader — what is the relation of this narrator to the discourse or story he is telling? Is the concealed narrator retelling his own tale or someone else's story? The phenomenon of a fluctuating and concealed narrator explodes the already very complex problem of a first person narrator as found in a confession or a monologue. When a narrator uses the first person pronoun or hides under the guise of another pronoun, can he avoid not speaking about himself? Benveniste encapsulated this tenuous paradox in a very perceptive remark: "Disant je, je ne puis ne pas parler de moi." [18] In fact, the narrator who conceals his identity destroys the very idea of reliability and abolishes the ground of belief or confidence the reader should have in the voice that is speaking.

The above-mentioned novels by Berkeley, Christie or Boileau-Narcejac owe their literary reputation to their original handling of narrative technique. Variations on narrative modes and techniques, as these stories prove, may take priority over the variations on plot in the creation of mystery. Modern authors, knowledgeable about detective story techniques like John Fowles in "Poor Koko" or John Hawkes in Second Skin, are presently engaged in experimentations with either direct confessions by victims and murderers or with mysterious ever-shifting narrators.

Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet explore in depth the murderer as first person narrator or as carrier of the primary viewpoint in some of their novels like Despair, Lolita and Le Voyeur; Borges and Robbe-Grillet will enlarge upon the inherent situation of a concealed narrator in a few outstanding short stories or novels like "Hombre de la esquina rosada," "La forma de la espada," "La casa de Asterión," and La Jalousie.[19] Indeed, the idea of a concealed narrator finds one of its best illustrations in Borges' story "La forma de la espada." The concealment of the narrator is so well treated in this narrative that it has been acclaimed by critics as a paradigm of this technique. Genette, for one, praises Borges' story as "l'exemple le plus spectaculaire":

> dans le conte ... le héros commence par raconter son aventure infâme en s'identifiant à sa victime, avant d'avouer qu'il est en fait l'autre, le lâche dénonciateur jusque-là traité, avec le mépris qu'il faut, en "troisième personne."[20]

The narrator has so skilfully told his tale that, at the end, when Borges (as listener) inquires about the fate of the traitor Moon, he is totally oblivious to the reality that the speaker's face before him is marred by a half-circle scar. The narrator must then reveal, with contempt for himself, that he, the traitor, has concealed his true identity throughout the account by assuming the mask or persona of the other, the hero. The play with narrative viewpoint renders it very difficult for the reader to rearrange and reverse the actions to make them conform with the new order. The reader must, as Barthes had said about Christie's novel, re-read the text and replace the 'he' pronoun by the 'I' pronoun. With the concealed narrator in "La forma de la espada," the main omission is transposed from its usual actional level to the narrational level, that is, the mystery is no longer concentrated on a criminal action but on the intriguing voice that is speaking. This technique of a concealed narrator is also very well embodied and developed in Robbe-Grillet's La Jalousie. Paradoxically, the narrator, albeit absent, is very much present but hidden in this novel and thus illustrates perfectly the notion of a concealed narrator. The narrator in La Jalousie will remain hidden and indistinguishable: the reader suspects that the unmediated and monomaniac voice is that of a jealous husband but this assumption is never conclusively confirmed.

It is very exceptional to find an author, impressed with orderly and functional plots, also making significant headway into new facets of narrative positions and voices. In Borges' ficciones, it is safe to assert, there are a few remarkable stories like "La forma de la espada," where narrative perspective determines the plot pattern. A similar plot outline of a duel may be varied, as we mentioned, by changing the angle of vision. For example, in "La muerte y la brújula," midway in the story, the omniscient selective viewpoint shifts from the detective to the murderer. Without this displacement or manipulation of narrative mode, the murderer's plan could never be disclosed. Hence, the handling of narrative viewpoint coincides with and even reinforces the interpenetration of the two plots structured on the idea of the double opponents. Like "La muerte y la brújula," where the exterior doubles were the cause of the inverted symmetrical plot, in "La forma de la espada," the plot depends on the narrative technique of the intrinsic merging of Moon and his friend.[21] The narrative strategy of concealment is therefore the main structural principle behind the symmetry and reversal of the plot. The technique of the concealed narrator, for Borges, extends beyond a narrative procedure to complete the author's plot structure and to create the fantastic.

Alain Robbe-Grillet is another author engrossed in experimenting with new and ingenious narrative techniques. From _Les Gommes_ up to his recent novels, we often find the original narrative technique closely allied to techniques associated with detective fiction: the multiple point of view of _Les Gommes_ where at least twelve centers of consciousness attempt to reconstitute the story of the crime, the omniscient selective viewpoint of a presumed murderer in _Le Voyeur_, the ruthlessly vigilant surveillance of a concealed but overheard observer in _La Jalousie_, the intertwined story of a concealed inner author in a room with an outside protagonist in the street in _Dans le labyrinthe_, the 'masks and metamorphoses' of the narrator in _La Maison de rendez-vous_, the 'narrator and his doubles' in _Projet pour une révolution à New York_.[22] We cannot underscore enough the primacy of techniques — including the narrative mode — in Robbe-Grillet's works: in a novel like _La Jalousie_, the purely formal operations of narrator concealment and omission eclipse the content of the narrative.

Although it would be highly interesting to pursue the topic of concealed narrators in Borges and Robbe-Grillet, this chapter studies the unique presentation of murderers who unabashedly profess their machinations and their crimes. Our inquiry centers on Nabokov and his substantial experimentation, in Despair and Lolita, with a narrative mode that reverses the detective structure and its order of mystery, investigation and solution.[23] By featuring a murderer-writer after his criminal act, the reader is offered the reconstruction of the pattern of the crime by the master-mind himself. Through this narrative strategy of permitting a murderer to recite his story, Nabokov has accomplished a dramatic variation.

* * *

Nabokov: "You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style."

Hermann in Nabokov's Despair had made a very perceptive intertextual remark when he reproved Conan Doyle for not having imagined his narrator Watson end the Sherlock Holmes saga by chronicling his own perfect murder, in other words, of being a murderer-writer. Unlike Borges, who excelled in the concealment of a voice, of either a murderer, a traitor or a victim, Nabokov does not often resort to the technique of a concealed narrator. Rather, in two of his novels which are identical in narrative perspective, Despair and Lolita, the murderer outrightly and effusively confesses his crime. In contrast to Borges' stories where the secret was based on a mysterious hidden narrator, Nabokov has exposed and even flaunted the fact that his narrators are murderers.

Whenever a critic of narrative technique needs to propose a good example of a modern self-conscious narrator, the obvious choice is often one of Nabokov's narrators, be it Kinbote or Humbert. For their part, specialists of Nabokov also recognize the persistent recurrence of the first-person self-conscious narrator in many of his novels. They readily identify the similarities between all these narrators who are essentially self-conscious in their role as writers and who possess some degree of eccentricity. The critic Stegner, as a case in point, does not discern a difference among any of these first person narrators:

> V is another of Nabokov's self-conscious narrators (like Humbert, Kinbote, Hermann in Despair, Smurov in The Eye) who are writing their stories, who are attempting to 'create' themselves through language, and in the process are hopelessly confusing art with life, illusion with reality.
>
> In Lolita and Pale Fire the point of view rests not only within a limited consciousness but within a morally eccentric consciousness.[24]

However, distinctions between the narrators should be made. On the one hand, some first-person narrators as V or Kinbote are observers, biographers, editors or critics, that is, detectives or sub-detectives who are studying or reconstituting another person's written story or life and only indirectly speaking about themselves. On the other hand, in another type of first-person viewpoint, the narrator is directly involved in the action; he is writing not another person's story but his own autobiography or confession, in this case, as murderer. Critics of Nabokov have seldom seen that Hermann and Humbert are alike as narrators and differ from a V or a Kinbote. Viewed from the perspective of the detective story, this differentiation of the narrator's position means that, as sub-detective, V is writing the 'outside story' of Sebastian's life, whereas Hermann and Humbert are composing or reconstructing retrospectively a personal account of their crimes or the 'inside story.' Hence, it is imperative to take cognizance of the narrative viewpoint since it is from the "eye" or the narrator's perspective that the plot pattern is either observed or developed. The idea of using a narrator-murderer, as we noted at the beginning of our chapter, is exceptionally original in detective fiction and in literature as a whole. Therefore, we restrict our analysis to the narrators Hermann and Humbert and their ability to convincingly report on the inside story all the while retaining the mystery of the pattern leading to the crime.

With the exception of Nabokov's early works like King, Queen Knave or Laughter in the Dark which are narrated from an omniscient selective viewpoint and concentrate alternatively on the three dominant opponents of the game, the author's later works are noteworthy for their exploration of the potentiality and the problematics of the first person perspective. If we consider the first person sub-detective narrators, we distinguish how V in The Real Life of Sebastian Knight and Kinbote in Pale Fire are biographers and commentators of literary works. V, two months after Sebastian's death in 1936, informs us of his search and research as biographer and critic as he progresses in the actual writing of his discoveries. Kinbote becomes the first person narrator and commentator of "Pale Fire" through a mistake on the part of the murderer Gradus. Since Kinbote had attempted, but very unsuccessfully, to protect the poet from the murderer, he received permission to be the editor of the poem and therefore spent the months of August to October 19th, 1959 in his cottage at Cedarn writing his critique. Hence, quite apart from being only the editor of the deceased poet's manuscript, Kinbote is also responsible for interweaving, in an appended liberal commentary to the poem, his retrospective vision of the final coincidental meeting of Gradus, Shade and himself in the garden and the bungled crime. As detective narrator, Kinbote proves to be very fallible in demonstrating that there exists a pattern of relationships between Shade's poem and the Zembla world — a pattern which he firmly believes was largely inspired by his own interesting conversations with the poet about Zembla.

Nabokov's deft handling of narrative technique is nowhere more apparent than in an early novelette The Eye where the pattern of the plot is determined and controlled by the shift in narrative speaker. In this story, in order to emphasize the plot-line of inquiry, the author introduced a very innovative narrative trick: the initial part of the story is narrated by Smurov as first person voice and vision and after his pseudo-suicide (omitted from the text), Smurov — we assume it is Smurov — recounts his story as first person but as though he were an impartial observer of himself. This dissociation of a hero from himself is made concrete and very visible through this alteration or disjunction between a subjective and an objective perspective. The movement from an interior to exterior point of view, always using a first person narrator, greatly adds to the effectiveness and major theme of detection or inquiry concerning how others perceive Smurov. It would have been more difficult for the author to present the hero's objective quest without the displacement of narrative vision. Since there is a transformation in the narrative perspective, we could envisage this novelette as representing a sort of concealed narrator. In addition, metamorphosis at the level of the plot and technique of narration, as observed in this story, could also be seen in the transformation of V in The Real Life of Sebastian Knight with the narrator's declaration that, because of his research, he has attained an identification with his subject and has consequently become Sebastian. We could even be permitted to notice a few parallels between Smurov or V and the traitor Moon in Borges' story precisely in this idea of the identification of two persons. Therefore, it could be argued that the two works by Nabokov, The Eye and The Real Life of Sebastian Knight, express some elements or overtones of the concealment and metamorphosis of the narrative voice.

Imagine, if you can, the involuted narrative Pale Fire elicited, not from the perspective of an obdurate editor-critic but from the point of view of the murderer Gradus. The criminal himself, before his suicide in a prison cell, instead of answering Kinbote's questions, could have rapidly and feverishly produced his own journal featuring the inside story of his life, his plans, his travels and his murder. This conjecture that Gradus could have written his own story is not far-fetched in view of Nabokov's own novels Despair and Lolita. A story told from the perspective of a murderer is certainly, in itself, a significant achievement for an author who is intent on transmuting the mechanics of detective fiction. The critics of both narrative viewpoint and the detective story, ever since the inception of the detective genre, have indeed beheld the possibility of the murderer retelling his own story. Nevertheless, these critics have always caustically reminded authors to refrain from adopting this narrative device because it totally obstructed the modus operandi of the genre. Even an important Jamesian critic like Percy Lubbock, as late as 1921, claimed that the murderer could never hope to be the narrator of his own story since he was in full command of all the facts surrounding the crime and there would be a breach of truth were he to reveal the unmediated vision of the events:

> In a tale of murder and mystery there is one man who cannot possibly be the narrator, and that is the murderer himself; for if he admits us into his mind

> at all he must do so without reserve, thereby betraying the secret that we ought to be guessing at for ourselves.[25]

In the same vein, Dorothy Sayers maintained that there is one narrative perspective untenable in detective fiction: the murderer as first person narrator divulging his own story. However, Sayers regretted the absence of the murderer as narrator in detective fiction since this narrative technique would have highlighted and intensified the whole gamut of crime and would have elevated the genre to greater artistic worth:

> It does not, and by hypothesis never can, attain the loftiest level of literary achievement. Though it deals with the most desperate effects of rage, jealousy, and revenge, it rarely touches the heights and depths of human passion. It presents us only with the _fait accompli_, and looks upon death and mutilation with a dispassionate eye. It does not show us the inner workings of the murderer's mind — it must not; for the identity of the murderer is hidden until the end of the book.[26]

Nabokov's strategy of using a murderer as first person narrator disproved the assertions of a Lubbock or even of a Sayers. By positioning Hermann and Humbert as narrators after their maleficent deed, that is, confessing their tale _retrospectively_, Nabokov has not radically altered the traditional narrative situation of a first person detective recounting his investigation and concluding with the surprise revelation of the mystery. After the investigation is finished, the detective reconstructs the story of the crime or _fabula_, and in the same way, after the crime is perpetrated, the murderer can relate the story of the planning and carrying out of the murder. Hence, the narrative viewpoint of the murderer, like the narrative perspective of the detective, depends principally on this fundamental idea of time past or of retrogade time — in short, it is only after an action is completed that it can be seen whole. Thus, Nabokov will have his two narrators complete the pattern of their crime only at the very close of their testimony. Obviously, the degree of knowledge that the murderer possesses about the crime is superior to that of the detective's surmise, but knowing the secret or mystery more or less is not really a determining factor. The detective and the murderer are both prevented by the poetics of the genre from releasing the bulk of their information until the dénouement with the closing of the central omission. In consequence, technically speaking, the inclusion of a murderer as narrator is sustainable. If an author like Agatha Christie turned to the technique of a concealed narrator, it was precisely to answer the overriding criterion demanded in the detective genre — that the murderer's identity be withheld until the dénouement. Indeed, as we know, the detective story cannot exist if the basic mystery of the murderer's identity is revealed before the end.

Nabokov, without undue hesitation, explodes this primary requirement of hiding the identity of the murderer. Hermann's and Humbert's respective identities as murderers are openly and repeatedly attested to in the course of their discourse. Nonetheless, ironically enough, this avowal by the narrators falls on deaf ears and the reader remains unconvinced even unaware that they are murderers because, as we have noted, the crime is not described until the resolution when the comprehensive pattern of actions can ultimately be perceived. Also, Nabokov has dramatically changed the nature of the inherent mystery in a detective story: he has moved the mystery from the decipherment of the murderer's identity to the decipherment of the victim's identity. Contrary to traditional detective fiction, when the murderer is narrator, it is feasible to have the mystery pertain to a hidden or an unknown adversary — the victim. Hermann and Humbert have arranged their tales to enshroud in mystery their opponents Felix and Quilty. Therefore, in summary, the reader cannot recognize the opponents and Hermann and Humbert as murderers since, as in chess, the game plan or "the design created by the designer" is inscrutable until the end.[27] In his own inimitable style, Nabokov gave preferential treatment to the murderer, and even to the victim as unsuspected manipulators of the murderers, and of the game plan.

Chesterton was one of the first writers of detective fiction to unequivocally remind his audience that the murderer did not hold a subordinate role. Indeed, the murderer with his plotting of a crime is the true creative agent in the detective story and by analogy he fulfills the role of the creative artist. This contention could not be more patent than in Nabokov's Despair and Lolita where the avocation of a Hermann and a Humbert is first to be a plotter or perpetrator of a crime and then plotter of a memoir or a journal about the crime. This idea of being 'doubly creative,' initially as murderer, then as writer, is very Nabokovian in spirit.[28] There is a distinction to be made in the degree of creativity between Hermann and Humbert. Despair accentuates the plotting of the problem or crime and the patterning of the artist in the throes of composing his first novel —"There was in me, I felt, a poet, an author ..." (p. 113); whereas in the later novel Lolita, the crime cannot be premeditated and les affres du style are not quite as disturbing (after all, Humbert is Professor of literature...!). Hermann and Humbert are nervously self-conscious of their fate as murderers awaiting some punishment and of their occupation as writers who wish, through the medium of art, preserve or explain their crime or first creative act:

"And so, in order to obtain recognition, to justify and save the offspring of my brain, to explain to the world all the depth of my masterpiece, did I devise the writing of the present tale." (Despair, pp. 204-205) The crucial concept of narrators as doubly creative rises to another level of thought when we consider how Nabokov, the author, can view the narrator of the text and in the text as his persona or double. In effect, these narrators who look upon their criminal act in retrospect are surrogates or "literary impersonators" of Nabokov because they, like him, have a full grasp of the pattern and stand above their work.[29] Hence, there is an unfathomable distance and ironic stance between the author, the narrators and the actions they are retelling. Since the murderer-writers are equipped with superior knowledge in the aftermath of their crime, they can afford to play with the ignorant reader. (And Nabokov can afford to play with the murderer-narrators who know less than they think they know.) In consequence, levels of parody are built into this narrative mode.

The position of the creative writers in Despair and Lolita is parallel: one artist, immediately after his crime committed on March 9th, 1931, hides in a distant resort hotel and, while anxiously scanning pages of the newspaper, spends from eight to eighteen hours every day writing in a "queer state of exhaustion"(p. 15)until April 1;the other weary writer, after his crime and arrest in September 1952 and until the time of his death from natural causes before his trial in November 1952, sits in his "tombal jail" demonstrating exceptional strength and resilience by persisting in his writing of a memoir under adverse conditions and in isolation — "I am writing under observation." (p. 12) Unbelievably, it took only two weeks for one writer and fifty-six days for the other to compose their confessions — (this swiftness in writing cannot in any way measure with the turtle-like pace of this present critic.) The novels Despair and Lolita are therefore told according to a very similar narrative perspective: a criminal while waiting to be brought to justice, passes the time reconstructing the story of his crime. In order to further analyze the murderer-narrators and their compositions, we will consider more closely 1) the confessional form, 2) the role of memory and of retrospective time and 3) the self-consciousness of the writer engaged in revealing his sources (the framing device), in elaborating his memoir and in intercalating the past story of the crime with the present activity of writing.

The confessions of Hermann and Humbert are reminiscent of the narrative perspective and style of Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment and Notes from Underground. In fact, as we recall, Hermann had proposed the mimic title "Crime and Pun" for his manuscript. Of course, Dostoevsky had originally planned to write Crime and Punishment using Raskolnikov as the first person narrator publicly indicting himself for his crime and guilt.[30] Even though Dostoevsky resolved to adopt an omniscient viewpoint, there are innumerable instances of confessions and interior monologues within the novel and the reader gains the impression that the murderer is the direct narrator. Also, Notes from Underground is regarded as influential in modern literature because of its narrative procedure. An over-anxious, acutely self-conscious narrator (but not murderer) punctuates his speech with direct addresses to the reader and pretends that a judge and jury are weighing the evidence of his confession. The climate of condemnation and defense particular to Crime and Punishment and Notes from Underground resurfaces, but very differently, in many modern narratives: in an existential context in Camus' La Chute and Le Renégat, and in a parodic auto-centric context in Nabokov's Despair and Lolita.[31] Nabokov's type of confession has obtained wide popularity with contemporary authors; for example, the French-Canadian novelist Hubert Aquin in Trou de mémoire (notice the title's emphasis on omission and memory) is indebted to Nabokov for his self-conscious and erratic first person criminal-narrator.

Hermann and Humbert, in their desire to convince or persuade, frequently address the reader. The tone or style of address reflects each narrator's temperament and situation. Of the two, Hermann is the more impertinent and even scornful since he wishes to prove to himself (and to others) that he resembles the victim or his double. His scurrilous interjections to the reader can be seen as a last desperate attempt to convince someone (anyone, even you the reader) of his sure resemblance to Felix:

> How I long to convince you! And I will, I will convince you! I will force you all, you rogues, to believe ... (p. 26)
>
> Enough, it is not all so simple as you seem to think, you swine, you! Oh, yes, I am going to curse at you, none can forbid me to curse. And not to have a looking glass in my room — that is also my right! (p. 31)

Humbert, for his part, is especially cautious since he is trying to persuade his reader as well as his jurymen and jurywomen of his innocence. In truth, his memoir is written as a defense in preparation for his trial and aims to sway his audience in order to solicit some form of partial sympathy. In the first half of his memoir, the persistence of direct addresses to the reader, the jury, and even his lawyer, are like a litany of invocations:

> Please, reader: no matter your exasperation with the tenderhearted, morbidly sensitive, infinitely circumspect hero of my book, do not skip these essential pages! Imagine me; I shall not exist if you do not imagine me; try to discern the doe in me, trembling in the forest of my own iniquity; let's even smile a little. (p. 131)
>
> Frigid gentlewomen of the jury! .... it was she who seduced me. (p. 134)
>
> Sensitive gentlewomen of the jury, I was not even her first lover. (p. 137)

However, this interjectional mode of narration ceases abruptly in the second part of the journal. The reader witnesses how, while writing about his crime, the narrator has had a change of heart or a conversion and decided to desist in his defense. This conversion is unexpected:

> When I started, fifty-six days ago, to write Lolita, first in the psychopathic ward for observation, and then in this well-heated, albeit tombal, seclusion, I thought I would use these notes in toto at my trial, to save not my head, of course, but my soul. In mid-composition, however, I realized that I could not parade living Lolita. I still may use part of this memoir in hermetic sessions, but publication is to be deferred. (p. 310)

Because of this new attitude, Humbert, as opposed to Hermann, according to the author, is granted "a green lane in Paradise."[32] Thus, Humbert requests that his memoir or apology not be published before Lolita's death. Following the traditional confessional form, as seen in world literature from Rousseau to Sartre, there is in the foreword to the memoir Lolita an explication by the editor of how this manuscript was found, not tampered with, and the reasons for its publication.

Because Hermann and Humbert must wait until after the crime to write their story, the question of the time or hiatus between the unfolding of the events and the time of writing is very important. For both narrators, the time evolved since the crime is negligible for they begin their journals only days after the murder. Humbert encompasses within his memoir a more prolonged time span to include memories of his childhood and his turbulent years with Lolita. In contrast, Hermann limits his journal to coincide with the actual time between his first meeting with Felix on May 9th, 1930 and the murder of Felix on March 9th, 1931. Each narrator has to rely on the vividness and the accuracy of his memory, and each murderer-turned-writer must coax his memory to —'Speak, memory.'

As Marcel Proust well knew, memory is a fascinating but capricious mental faculty. The process of memory is not subject to the laws of chronology: memory has its own inner logic and transcends time and space. In letting their memory speak, the two "artists in recollection" permit their confession to develop in an unchronological manner. The narratives move in a haphazard and diffuse fashion oscillating between the far distant past, the immediate past, the present and the future. Hermann for example is very pleased to capture on paper this randomness and inexhaustibility of the memory: "While apologizing for the muddle and mottle of my tale let me repeat that it is not I who am writing, but my memory, which has its own whims and rules" (p. 62) and again notes: "An artist's memory — what a curious thing! Beats all other kinds, I imagine." (p. 213) Likewise, Humbert will excuse himself for the telescoping of unchronological events and for the imprecision of some details: "Being a murderer with a sensational but incomplete and unorthodox memory ..." (p. 219)

Whenever an artist tries to recapture the past, he must do so in the light of the present. A memoir or confession is told retrospectively and the writer can no longer see the past events in their pristine state: his vision of the past has been coloured and reshaped by the intervening time. The writer is unable to describe a scene or an action without taking into account the superimposed actions that are intimately affiliated with that scene in his memory. To illustrate, Hermann cannot evoke a summer picnic at Ardelion's lake and wooded terrain without having a picture in his mind of the secluded wood on a winter's night obtrude, that is, in Genette's terms, the vision does not correspond with the more knowledgeable voice:

> The pines soughed gently, snow lay about, with bald patches of soil showing black. What nonsense! How could there be snow in June? Ought to be crossed out, were it not wicked to erase; for the real author is not I, but my impatient memory. Understand it just as you please; it is none of _my_ business. And the yellow post had a skull cap of snow too. _Thus the future shimmers through the past_. (p. 47)
> (we underline last line)

Through their use of memory and a retrospective vision, both Hermann and Humbert are able to thrust into the narrative very meaningful allusions to the future, as in the passage above, and thus create their intricate patterns without the reader's full comprehension until he reaches the conclusion.

Anticipating that the memory will be capricious, the narrators, in their artistic enterprise, also resort to letters, diaries, books as sources of information to refresh their memory. Such a use of notes, memos and maps is a common practice in detective fiction. When the self-conscious narrator of Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot begins his story, the conventions of the genre demand that he present his credentials and well-founded reasons for having the authority and the proven knowledge to tell the story of the sensational crime. As an expositionary framing device, in "The Speckled Band," to cite one example among many, Dr. Watson discusses, in an opening paragraph, from whom he obtained the story, what is his relation to the detective, how good is his memory in retaining facts and his expertise in taking notes:

> In glancing over my notes of the seventy odd cases in which I have during the last eight years studied the methods of my friend Sherlock Holmes, I find many tragic, some comic, a large number merely strange, but none commonplace; for, working as he did rather for the love of his art than for the acquirement of wealth, he refused to associate himself with any investigation which did not tend towards the unusual, and even the fantastic.[33]

Poirot's narrator will also open his narrative by mentioning the public's curiosity about the infamous crime and by explicitly revealing that he has official permission to release the facts about the case:

> The intense interest aroused in the public by what was known at the time as "The Styles Case" has now somewhat subsided. Nevertheless, in view of the world-wide notoriety which attended it, I have been asked, both by my friend Poirot and the family themselves, to write an account of the whole story. This, we trust, will effectually silence the sensational rumours which still persist.[34]

This framing device of acknowledging sources, stating the narrator's position precisely as recorder of events and his relation to the story being told is also established in Despair and Lolita. Like The Mysterious Affair at Styles, Humbert's crime received wide and vicious publicity and the editor publishes the memoir in response to the press coverage and to give the murderer a chance to tell his story: "References to "H. H." 's crime may be looked up by the inquisitive in the daily papers for September 1952; its cause and purpose would have continued to remain a complete mystery, had not this memoir been permitted to come under my reading lamp." (p. 6) And Humbert himself, like a Dr. Watson or a Hastings, has a few texts that can serve as guidelines in reconstructing his crime. Although he has to recreate the lost diary about his period of residence in the Haze household, he can pore over a few scraps of paper, road maps and texts that are found in his prison library: "(this is not too clear I am afraid, Clarence, but I did not keep any notes, and I have at my disposal only an atrociously crippled tour book in three volumes, almost a symbol of my torn and tattered past, in which to check these recollections)." (p. 156)

Not only do Hermann and Humbert speak about their memory and utilization of data with respect to the chronicling of their past, we also see them furtively sitting at their desk in their hotel room or jail cell in the very process of writing their manuscript. This presentation of a narrator-writer engaged in his task furnishes literature with a good example of what modern theories of narration describe as "représenter _l'acte_ _même_ _d'écriture_:il est dit alors explicitement que ce que nous lisons est un livre et on décrit le procès de sa création."[35] Understandably, critics of mainstream literature consider this practice of a writer self-reflected in a work very rare and modern — a tradition culminating with Borges, Butor, Robbe-Grillet and the Nouveau Roman. However, if critics were familiar with popular fiction, they would know that this 'modern' and very interesting phenomenon of duplicating the writer within the narrative is found relatively often in detective fiction, a genre that, because of its anti-mimetic nature, looks inwards and through all types of inner duplications including the duplication of the writer in the narrative, exteriorizes its own creation or fabrication. A Dr. Watson and Hastings, for example, not only impart parenthetical remarks about their sources and intertextual remarks about detective fiction but emerge in the narrative as well-defined narrator-writers in the act of retelling the investigation. Hermann and Humbert, for their part, are clearly depicted in the novel as murderers and apprentice writers. Both, locked in a room, spend their days and nights discovering the frustrations and moments of joy that one can derive from 'playing with words' or to quote Humbert: "O, my Lolita, I have only words to play with!" (p. 34):

> To tell the truth, I feel rather weary. I keep on writing from noon to dawn, producing a chapter per day — or more. What a great powerful thing art is! In my situation, I ought to be flustering, scurrying, doubling back .... There is of course no immediate danger.
> (Despair, p. 167)

> This daily headache in the opaque air of this tombal jail is disturbing, but I must persevere. Have written more than a hundred pages and not got anywhere yet. My calendar is getting confused. That must have been around August 15, 1947. Don't think I can go on. Heart, head — everything. Lolita, lolita, ..." (Lolita, p. 111)

The murderer-writers Hermann and Humbert, aware that their writing careers will be brief, are involved in a furious race against time. Since they are preoccupied with time, the narrators often allude to the actual time when they are writing their journal along with the more traditional notation of dates concerning the events of the past crime. Because of these self-conscious references to the present time of writing, the time sequence of the story is broken off and destroyed. Direct references to the present and other comments about the difficulties of composition shift the line of action from the crime to the writing process. We can define these two time spans — the time of the unfolding of the story and the time of writing the story — according to Jean Ricardou's dichotomy between "le temps de la narration" and "le temps de la fiction," or to use another handy grid, Michel Butor's distinction between "le temps de l'aventure" and "le temps de l'écriture."[36] Consequently, in Despair and Lolita, there is a disruption in time whenever the narrator cuts the flow of the story by adverting to his artistic task. These alternations create a dechronology in the text and the reader has to transport himself from the world of fiction to the world of 'écriture.' Every break or cut in the narration and every allusion to 'écriture' identifies the work as an artificial fabrication which calls attention to its own fictionality.

Allusions to the time of writing usually go hand in hand with references to the place of writing. For instance, when Hermann or Humbert speak of writing eighteen hours a day, they inevitably mention their cramped corners wherein this marathon session occurred. Theorists of contemporary self-reflecting literature as Ricardou, Butor or Genette, however, restrict their comments about the effect of the inner duplication of the writer in the text to its disarrangement and fragmentation of time. These critics and writers do not believe that the concept of the space of writing is also implied. Genette, to exemplify, argues that the idea of the place of writing in the text is ineffectual: "je peux fort bien raconter une histoire sans préciser le lieu où elle se passe, et si ce lieu est plus ou moins éloigné du lieu d'où je la raconte, tandis qu'il m'est presque impossible de ne pas la situer dans le temps par rapport à mon acte narratif." [37] Nabokov, on the other hand, is one of the very first writers to expound the view that a writer in the narrative, like a writer in the 'real' world, is not a spirit but a human being and while in the act of writing he is located in a particular spot; hence references to the space along with allusions to the time of writing are both significant: "... while a man is writing, he is situated in some definite place; he is not simply a kind of spirit, hovering over the page. While he muses and writes, there is something or other going on around him ...." (Despair, p. 53) Thus, as Nabokov rightly insists, the description of the place of writing is complementary to the idea of the time of writing. In the passages about writing cited previously, for example, Hermann associated his long hours with his hotel room and Humbert his toil with his tombal jail. Seeing Hermann and Humbert as writers at their desk is especially crucial since both are prisoners. And for Humbert, the jail cell with its library is in a way the center of the novel around which everything revolves since it is from this room and library that emerges the first clues or "keys to Lolita."[38]

Immersed in the art of writing the 'inside story' of their crime, Hermann and Humbert proceed cautiously. They retell their story retrospectively, knowing the complete sequences of action but arranging them so that the pattern of events will only be apprehended by the reader in the dénouement. Like Nabokov who claimed, for instance, that the writing of Lolita resembled the "composition of a beautiful puzzle — its composition and its solution at the same time, since one is a mirror view of the other, depending on the way you look," both Hermann and Humbert are very self-conscious of their analogous task of puzzle-making.[39] As surrogates of the author, their ultimate intention is to baffle and thwart the reader in his comprehension of the design.

Humbert deliberately omits from his adventure the name and identity of his pursuer until the moment prior to the murder at the end. Humbert, the writer, takes pleasure in knowing that all fragments of his narrative will finally cohere into one exquisite whole when the enigma is clarified:

> Quietly the fusion took place, and everything fell into order, into the pattern of branches that I have woven throughout this memoir with the express purpose of having the ripe fruit fall at the right moment; yes, with the express and perverse purpose of rendering ... that golden and monstrous peace through the satisfaction of logical recognition, which my most inimical reader should experience now. (p. 274)

The reader of Lolita (including Humbert since he re-reads his manuscript) will experience joy and delight when he grasps the underlying design or game-plan upon completing the story. The reader will further discover that Humbert's confession originated from the point of view of the opponent who had been "enmeshed" and "entrapped" by Quilty and Lolita ("In order to break some pattern of fate in which I obscurely felt myself being enmeshed" (p. 217) "... he [Quilty] succeeded in thoroughly enmeshing me and my thrashing anguish in his demoniacal game." (p. 251)). Knowing the final pattern, the reader will then realize that he, in turn, has been "enmeshed" and "entrapped" in the realm of art by Humbert and his well-crafted puzzle.

Hermann also reads his text, but unlike Humbert, this process entails 'despairing' discoveries. It often goes unnoticed that Hermann (like Humbert) after writing his manuscript, indulges in the reading of his literary exercise:

> In quest of some way of freeing myself of those intolerable forebodings [that he would be captured] I gathered the sheets of my manuscript, weighed the lot on my palm, even muttered a facetious "well, well!" and decided that before penning the two or three final sentences I would read it over from beginning to end.
> (p. 210)

Humbert wrote his story, as we said, after the events surrounding his crime were settled, whereas Hermann began writing his confession while in hiding and hence does not yet know the outcome of the police investigation. He composed his narrative under the impression that he had fooled everyone by committing an error-proof crime and writing a masterpiece. After reading his manuscript, Hermann apprehends with terror that his mistake about the stick totally shatters his double creation — his perfect crime and perfect narrative. His confession was created with confidence, thinking that he was in control of the game-plan. However, there is an ironic undercutting since Hermann's plot leaves him in the role of the mimic rather than the model, the blundering fool rather than the master-planner. In both Lolita and Despair, levels of parody are thus produced: the author manipulates the narrator-writer and the narrator-writer in turn controls the reader.

In a manner similar to the reading activity of Hermann and Humbert, readers of Despair and Lolita perceive with astonishment — stupefaction or satisfaction — the design of the narrative at the end. An astute reader of a Nabokov novel experiences a state of 'aesthetic bliss' when he distinguishes from the clutter of "stratagems" or subterfuge the true pattern of action; once this pattern has been retrieved, it will remain forever nestled in his mind. There is a beautiful anecdote in Speak, Memory which dramatically illustrates this idea of the reader's role as puzzle-decipherer (or detective). In a city of western France, just before Nabokov, his wife and young child embarked on a ship for America, they strolled in the avenues of a public park. Following leisurely the paths of a flower garden, they eventually arrived at a panoramic point where they could view, like a reader who has reached the final pages, the complete "blooming design":

> ... for suddenly, as we came to the end of its path, you and I saw something that we did not immediately point out to our child, so as to enjoy in full the blissful shock, the enchantment and glee he would experience on discovering ahead the ungenuinely gigantic, the unrealistically real prototype of the various toy vessels he had doddled about in his bath. There, in front of us, where a broken row of houses stood between us and the harbor, and where the eye encountered all sorts of stratagems, ... it was most satisfying to make out among the jumbled angles of roofs and walls, a splendid ship's funnel, showing from behind the clothesline as something in a scrambled picture — Find What the Sailor Has Hidden — that the finder cannot unsee once it has been seen.[40]

* * *

CHAPTER FIVE

"... the detective suddenly stops thinking out loud and ever so gently closes the door of his mind in the reader's face."

R. Chandler *

OMISSION AND TECHNIQUES OF RETARDATION: ROBBE-GRILLET

Detective Fiction — A Poetics of Omission

Probably no other quality of literature attracts more readers than the suspense of a detective story. But once the riveting plot and resolution are known, the book is usually discarded and the reader rarely looks back to identify characteristic techniques inherent in the art of writing detective fiction or of composing puzzles. Indeed, some time ago, Chesterton in an essay "On Detective Novels," deplored the fact that the poetics of the detective genre did not arouse critical interest: "it is all the more curious that the technique of such tales is not discussed, because they are exactly the sort in which technique is nearly the whole of the trick." [1] The theorist Todorov, in his analysis of the fantastic tradition, suggests that especially with this type of enigmatic literature, a second reading of the narrative is obligatory before a reader can study the procedures that come into play to create the story. Todorov's remarks were directed towards fantastic tales but they would pertain equally well, if not better, to detective stories:

> De là que la première et la seconde lecture d'un conte fantastique donnent des impressions très différentes (beaucoup plus que pour un autre type de récit); en fait, à la seconde lecture, l'identification [avec le personnage ou le narrateur] n'est plus possible, la lecture devient inévitablement méta-lecture: on relève les procédés du fantastique [ou du roman policier] au lieu d'en subir les charmes. [2]

François Truffaut, in his conversations with Alfred Hitchcock, was keenly preoccupied with one essential technique or procedure underlying the master's films. What impressed him most about the haunting film Rebecca, for instance, was the scenes that were absent or excluded from the movie: "The mechanism of Rebecca is remarkable. The sinister momentum is built up solely through references to a dead woman who is never shown."[3] This mechanism of omission or of leaving gaps or again of witholding information not only defines the art of films as Frenzy or Vertigo but also describes without question the fundamental or primary means of creating mystery in Poe, Ellery Queen, Agatha Christie, not to mention Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet. There is a growing tendency for authors from Henry James, to Hemingway, to Faulkner, to Nabokov, to Hawkes, and of course to Robbe-Grillet, Butor and the nouveau roman, to call attention to what they have termed either the "glory of the gap," the "iceberg theory," the "trou," the "fissure," behind their works. Butor, spokesman for all these mystery-makers, summarizes well the eruption of "le vide" and its ripple effect on the text: "On pourra souligner l'importance de tel moment par son absence, par l'étude de ses alentours, faire sentir ainsi qu'il y a une lacune dans le tissu de ce qu'on raconte ou quelque chose que l'on cache."[4] Given this trend in modern literature and films towards an always greater experimentation with techniques of mystery and ambiguity and in order to keep pace with these enigmatic texts, it becomes imperative for modern criticism to establish some type of theory or method of analysis into the creation and sustaining of enigmas. Barthes' essay S/Z, which attempted to explain the production of enigmas, was a first important step in this direction. Other critics of fiction, like

Rutherford, following in the wake of Barthes or Todorov, explicitly call for the development of such a critical instrument: "The enigma is ... an important part of narrative mode, and any theory of narrative should include a theory of enigma."[5]

What is absent is often far more significant than what is actually present or written in a detective narrative. In other words, as formulated in our prototext, the *fabula* is omitted or does not appear in the narrative and the story of the investigation or the *sjužet* is entirely devoted to the searching out of this mystery or the reconstruction of the *fabula*. Hence, the primary omission that structures a detective tale is another way of speaking about the *fabula* or mystery. This primary gap, usually found at the beginning and therefore called an "expositionary gap," constitutes or provokes the resulting action.[6] From tales of ratiocination, thrillers to spy fiction such as "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," *The Chinese Orange Mystery*, *The Big Sleep* or *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold*, this absence or omission which controls the organization of the narration is normally the unknown scene of the crime. As soon as this central gap, with which the whole narrative is concerned, is reconstituted or filled in, the fictional work cannot but come to an end. An excellent example of a direct reference to the central omission can be seen in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. In the last pages of his confession, Dr. Sheppard takes pride in the fact that he has ingeniously told us everything about the investigation except — "that blank ten minutes" — or the central omission of his own crime:

> I am rather pleased with myself as a writer. What could be neater, for instance, than the following: "The letters were brought in at twenty minutes to nine.

> It was just on ten minutes to nine when I left him, the letter still unread. I hesitated with my hand on the door handle, looking back and wondering if there was anything I had left undone."
>
> All true, you see. But suppose I had put a row of stars after the first sentence! Would somebody then have wondered what exactly happened in that blank ten minutes? [7]

Before we pursue our inquiry into omissions, we should distinguish between what we call a central omission or "that blank ten minutes" necessarily found in detective fiction from secondary omissions that inform to some degree all fictional texts. Detective fiction is characterized by its main omission but it also makes abundant use of secondary or temporary gaps all along its narrative. Thus, the detective story can be seen as the composite of a main omission that is only explicated or filled in at the end and of many secondary gaps which may or may not be completely resolved or filled in. This difference between the central omission or the mystery which governs the plot of detective fiction and the secondary omissions which prolong and complicate the major mystery is essential for an understanding of the techniques particular to detective fiction. (Although there are slight variances in meaning, the distinction between a central omission and secondary omissions could be explained by alluding to Tomashevsky's contrast between "bound motifs" which cannot be removed and "free motifs" which are often 'misleading,' or by considering Dorfman's contrast between "core elements" and "marginal elements.") [8] We note that a critic like Gérard Genette, for instance, in his illustration of his term paralipse or the omission of a thought or an action from a narrative, does not grasp the elemental mechanics of detective fiction. The fact that he elucidates the idea of omission with a popular text indicates however the pre-eminence of this technique in the detective genre. For Genette, all omissions are of the same nature and occupy the same function:

> A propos de ce qu'il nomme le "mélange des systèmes," Barthes cite à juste titre la "tricherie" qui consiste, chez Agatha Christie, à focaliser un récit comme _Cinq heures vingt-cinq_ ou _Le Meurtre de Roger Ackroyd_ sur le meurtrier en omettant de ses "pensées" le simple souvenir du meurtre; et l'on sait que le roman policier le plus classique, quoique généralement focalisé sur le détective enquêteur, nous cache le plus souvent une partie de ses découvertes et de ses inductions jusqu'à la révélation finale.[9]

We cannot underline enough how Genette's general view of omissions in detective fiction is erroneous: the "blank ten minutes" or the central omission in _The Murder of Roger Ackroyd_ is not of the same type as the other less important absences or omissions. The gradual threshing out of the correct clues from the false ones — be they the rare dagger, the telephone call, the blackmail or the inheritance — all have to do with the filling in of secondary gaps. The central omission or crime pertains to the region of the _fabula_ whereas the secondary omissions are part of the narrator's and the detective's search and are therefore parcelled out in the _sjužet_.

Modern authors who create permanent enigmatic narratives, like authors of detective fiction, base their works on the idea of a major omission. There is a fundamental difference however between what Boileau-Narcejac labelled "une littérature de l'ambiguité" and the modern experimentations with ambiguity; very concretely _The Murder of Roger Ackroyd_ or _The Big Sleep_ strive to retain the main omission open until a propitious moment whereas _The Turn of the Screw_ or _The Lime Twig_ seek to leave the main omission partially resolved but never absolutely or conclusively explained.[10] Simply stated, there is in one the filling in of the main gap but in the other, this main gap is purposely left indefinite and permanently open. Henry James is one of the earliest and foremost writers to make use of an unresolved major omission. In his much studied *The Turn of the Screw*, for instance, readers and critics are frustrated by the crucial mystery or the blank that is never answered — were there really ghosts at Bly? It is these absences or central omissions that Borges, as one reader of Henry James' tales, finds most irritating yet intriguing:

> Iniciada la lectura, nos molestan algunas ambigüedades, algún rasgo superficial; al cabo de unas páginas comprendemos que esas deliberadas negligencias enriquecen el libro. ... *Se trata de la voluntaria omisión de una parte de la novela, que nos permite interpretarla de una manera o de otra;* ambas premeditadas por el autor, ambas definidas. Así, ignoramos, en "The Lesson of the Master," si el consejo dado al discípulo es o no pérfido; en "The Turn of the Screw," si los niños son víctimas o agentes de los espectros que a su vez pueden ser demonios; en *The Sacred Fount*, cuál de las damas que simulan indagar el misterio de Gilbert Long es la protagonista de ese misterio; en "The Abasement of the Northmores," el destino final del provecto de Mrs. Hope. [11]

As the above passage from a Borges prologue demonstrates, omissions are omnipresent in Henry James' short stories. James himself coined the phrase "glory in a gap" when reviewing the novels of Joseph Conrad. The narrator in Conrad, according to James, has the occasion to omit material thus permitting him to incessantly turn over in his mind facets of a mystery:

> Mr. Conrad's first care ... is expressly to posit or set up a reciter, a definite responsible intervening first person singular, possessed of infinite sources of references ... to the situation or the subject, the thing 'produced', shall, if the fancy takes it, once more and yet once more glory in a gap. [12]

Henry James' critical assessment of Conrad's art is very enlightening in view of the fact that it points out two areas of predilection in his own criticism. James' pioneering ideas about narrative perspective and centers of consciousness found fertile soil and engendered a hearty species of critics and theorists of point of view and narratology from Lubbock, to Booth and to Dorrit Cohn. The equally seminal idea of creating enigmas through an omission or gap fell on dry ground. It is unfortunate for literary criticism that the technique of gaps has not received much theoretical attention. A critic like Shlomith Rimmon in The Concept of Ambiguity — the Example of James examines the main omissions in Henry James while effortlessly moving back to find examples from the popular genre that distinguishes itself for its central omissions and moving forward to cite works from modern authors, notably Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet.[13] Should a critic study permanent enigmas in contemporary texts, it would be very wise and fruitful to bear in mind the genre whose sole preoccupation is the creation of mystery. Incidentally, one of the most visible literary traditions of the use of gaps can be seen in those authors who have transformed the detective genre — Faulkner, Robbe-Grillet and the nouveau roman.

It would be technically feasible for a detective story to consist of a main omission followed immediately by its resolution. To develop into something other than a riddle, the main omission or mystery must be kept suspended for a time. As we have stressed in our thesis, there is an inherent paradox in the poetics of the detective genre. While a central omission will ultimately be reducible, an author arranges to defer this explication for as long as possible. Hence, nearly all the pages of a detective story will be judged, once the solution is reached, to have been fascinating but irrelevant. In the words of Geoffrey Hartman, "the detective story structure [contains] — strong beginnings and endings, and a deceptively rich, counterfeit, 'excludable' middle —."[14] Consequently, this "excludable middle" will comprehend procedures that will complicate or pad out the narrative. In his handling of the enigma, an author resorts to various techniques: some of the most outstanding being the introduction, manipulation and filling in of secondary or temporary gaps and other devices of obfuscation and retardation as suppositions, repetitions, digressions or falsifications, namely any technique that has the power to mystify or prolong the solution to the basic mystery. We indiscriminately use the terms techniques of obfuscation or techniques of retardation to define these devices. Of course the devices themselves are operative for both processes — the compounding of the complexity and the extension of the duration.

One good way of defining secondary omissions would be to see them as little pockets of mystery distributed along the main narrative line where some contribute to the partial disclosure of the main omission and where others are signs diverting attention away from the major clues. These secondary mysteries are in a sense self-perpetuating: each temporary omission generates new problems and perplexities. Taken together, these minor temporary gaps are the indispensable fabric of the narrative or the sjužet in detective fiction. They divulge in a roundabout manner the information and action that must be gleaned and weighed carefully by the reader in his task of reassembling the general design. To describe more fully a secondary omission, let us consider its function in a novel like A la recherche du temps perdu and in a thriller like The Big Sleep. In Proust's novel, there are a plethora of secondary gaps, one of the most vivid and suspenseful is without doubt the mystery of the identity of 'la dame en rose.' Proust will withhold the name of this character and her true relation to Gilberte for well over a thousand pages. This minor mystery does not affect the structure or major mystery of time in the novel.[15] As we said above, all narratives possess some element of mystery and hence secondary gaps. It is precisely for this reason that a Barthes can formulate a theory of enigma derived from a Balzac novel or a Genette can usher in the topic of prolipse in a discussion of Proust's novel. Notwithstanding the diverse use of temporary gaps by authors, it is in a detective narrative that they thrive: "Temporary gaps are, for example, both fewer in number and less central in position in a novel of manners or a picaresque tale than in a detective story, which stands or falls by the author's skill in handling them."[16] A memorable and terrifying scene in Chandler's The Big Sleep occurs because of the detective's deliberate withholding of his deductions or his 'ever so gently clos[ing] the door of his mind in the reader's face.' Carmen Sternwood, one of the characters, standing on a remote site, fires her gun at Philip Marlowe. The reader, at first certain of the detective's death, is later surprised to learn that the detective, suspecting Carmen of the murder, had devised a plan to reenact the murder scene and had replaced the real bullets with rubber ones. This minor omission about exchanging the bullets is one of the last pieces to clarify the major omission of the crime.

How does an author organize his narrative so that it does not progress smoothly and swiftly towards its resolution? How can language which is inescapably a carrier of meaning be converted into a vehicle that arrests or thwarts meaning or interpretation? The inherent paradox of the detective genre — arresting the enigma while the narrative advances — is also the modus operandi behind the manipulation of any type of mystery. Some of the procedures that enter into maintaining the enigma opened are explored in Barthes' model of a hermeneutic system. He attempts to identify the linguistic devices that establish the "excludable middle" of an enigmatic text or the whole narrative between the signalling of the enigma and the resolution:

> c'est une dynamique statique: le problème est de maintenir l'énigme dans le vide initial de sa réponse; alors que les phrases pressent le "déroulement" de l'histoire ... le code herméneutique exerce une action contraire ... car il oppose à l'avancée inéluctable du langage un jeu echelonné d'arrêts: c'est, entre la question et la réponse tout un espace dilatoire, dont l'emblème pourrait être la "réticence".[17]

In an increasing order of difficulty, Barthes enumerates devices as: le leurre or the misleading or false reply, l'équivoque or ambivalent term, la réponse partielle, la réponse suspendue, le blocage or insisting that the mystery is insoluble. Since Barthes' devices are really a study of the nuances in the idea of ambiguity or plurisignation, there is no sharp distinction between his more or less homogeneous categories.

To illustrate the practical utility of Barthes' code of "les unités déroutantes," let us cite an example from detective fiction and one from Borges and Nabokov.[18] In The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, the narrator's description of his secret activities before leaving the murdered man's room is couched in an équivoque: "I hesitated with my hand on the door handle, looking back and wondering if there was anything I had left undone." Once the reader learns about

Dr. Sheppard's crime, these words,"if there was anything I had left undone," found at the beginning of the novel and repeated at the end, indeed take on a double meaning.[19] In "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," we find another 'tromperie de l'auteur' or to use Barthes' classification leurre or équivoque.[20] It had been interpreted by contemporaries and scholars of Ts'ui Pên that the word "and" signified two artefacts: a book and a labyrinth:

> ... renunció al poder temporal para escribir una novela que fuera todavía más populosa que el Hung Lu Meng y para edificar un laberinto en el que se perdieran todos los hombres. (p. 475)
>
> ... todo lo abandonó para componer un libro y un laberinto. (p. 476)
>
> pero no es difícil conjeturar lo que sucedió. Ts'ui Pên diría una vez: Me retiro a escribir un libro. Y otra: Me retiro a construir un laberinto. Todos imaginaron dos obras; nadie pensó que libro y laberinto eran un solo objeto. (p. 477)

After his decipherment of Ts'ui Pên's letter, Stephen Albert conjectured that this word was misleading and that, in truth, the book was the labyrinth in time. And in Lolita, the major mystery of the identity of Humbert's rival is well-hidden under many disguises and clues throughout the narrative. We are aware that Humbert will never uncover this central enigma until Lolita's explicit confession. One of the enemy's masks is playfully alluded to in an équivoque or réponse partielle. The reader exults in the jeu de mots with the opponent's name:

> As expected, poor Poet stumbled in Scene III when arriving at the bit of French nonsense. Remember? Ne manque pas de dire à ton amant, Chimène, comme le lac est beau car il faut qu'il t'y mène. Lucky beau! Qu'il t'y — What a tongue-twister! (p. 225)

Our three authors give credit to Barthes' system of hermeneutic tactics. Nabokov, in particular, with his flawless language of camouflage or deception, exhausts Barthes' categories in a minute — Nabokov's linguistic aptitudes go far beyond Balzac's *Sarrasine*.

The subject of omissions and prominent techniques of obfuscation and retardation concludes well our discussion of detective fiction and completes our earlier chapters on plot structure and narrative perspective. These techniques, previously set forth as the fifth constituent of our prototext, directly affect the unfolding of the plot pattern and the narrator's mode. The plot carries the main omission, the pockets of secondary gaps and also the repetitions and the conjectures that impede the progress of its "excludable middle" or "espace dilatoire."[21] The narrator, on the other hand, is the agent who will omit fundamental information and divulge excess or contradictory data in his use of repetitions and suppositions that could 'perhaps' explain the omission. For instance, it is the narrator who will employ a conjectural style and this will be reflected in a plot pattern constructed on omissions and the formulation of hypotheses. An author like Borges or Robbe-Grillet, in his organization of repetitions and possibilities, has left the primary omission and other gaps often indeterminate and thus has produced a permanently irreducible text. The major omission and secondary gaps in a narrative inevitably lead an author to adopt various techniques of obfuscation. This chapter will dwell on the pervasive techniques of repetition, especially the repetition of formal and less formal hypotheses in Robbe-Grillet's novels *Les Gommes*, *Le Voyeur* and *La Jalousie*.[22]

* * *

Robbe-Grillet: "Un trou demeurait toujours dans l'emploi du temps."

Robbe-Grillet, in interviews with critics or at conferences, as early as 1961 and as late as 1976, has taken great pains to expound the source of mystery and ambiguity in his novels — the major omission that is purposely left opened, or as Mathias had said: "un trou demeurait toujours dans l'emploi du temps." Robbe-Grillet's elaboration of a poetics of omission with the resulting repetitions and conjectures applies to all his early novels. To begin our analysis of Robbe-Grillet and the function of omissions in his narratives, we should read with care his cardinal statements on the technique of omission from Les Gommes to L'Année dernière à Marienbad. One of Robbe-Grillet's most detailed speeches about omissions was a response to an interview question in Cahiers du cinéma; another explication of omissions in his early texts and his later more erotic works was delivered in Diacritics; and at the Colloque de Cerisy, the author reaffirmed the existence of this fundamental technique in his novels. These later declarations may be viewed as counter-arguments against critics like Bruce Morrissette who relegate this topic of omissions to a measly footnote. (Incidentally, Morrissette also relegates the topic of detective fiction and Robbe-Grillet to a few sarcastic even vitriolic remarks.)

> Pour Marienbad, j'ai écrit, non pas un scénario, mais directement un découpage. (1961)
>
> le phénomène important est toujours comme à l'état de creux au coeur de cette réalité .... Comme le personnage principal de La Jalousie n'est qu'un creux, comme l'acte principal, le meurtre, est en creux dans Le Voyeur. Tout est raconté avant le trou, puis de nouveau après le trou, et on essaie de rapprocher les deux bords pour faire disparaître

> ce vide gênant. Mais c'est tout le contraire qui se produit: c'est le vide qui envahit, qui remplit tout. (1961)
>
> There is the problematics of the hole in the narrative (récit); it had already appeared in Les Gommes (the missing murder), in Le Voyeur (the missing crime), in La Jalousie (the missing character). The hole has assumed such importance that, practically speaking, the narrator has fallen into the hole, and in Topologie, he reappears on the other side. (1976)
>
> Quand je repense aux Gommes, au Voyeur, à La Jalousie, ce qui me frappe, c'est une approche croissante de ce qu'est ce vide central de l'oeuvre. (1976)[23]

It should be mentioned that two critics, unlike Bruce Morrissette, have been interested in the "vide central" in the novels of Robbe-Grillet. Maurice Blanchot in "La Clarté romanesque" and Olga Bernal in her treatise with the subtitle Le Roman de l'absence address themselves to the dynamics of omission.[24] For her part, studying 'le vide' as prevalent image and purveyor of uncertainty, Bernal makes in passing a reference to how the French author's mode of creating enigmas falls within the tradition of the detective genre and is congruent with the writing styles and techniques of authors like Hemingway and Faulkner who are fascinated by ellipses and absences.[25] In her only note about this tradition, the critic points to detective fiction and Faulkner's novels as works that ultimately dispel the mystery whereas in Robbe-Grillet's novels, the mystery abides without relief:

> C'est par cette incapacité de combler ses propres lacunes que le roman de Robbe-Grillet diffère de celui de Faulkner, dans le sens précisément où on a pu les comparer. Le roman de Faulkner gravite autour d'un trou dans le récit qui ne se remplit que très graduellement, vers la fin du roman. ...
>
> Le roman policier pose, dès le début, cette victoire

> de l'homme sur l'inconnu. Le trou dans le roman policier est une connaissance, une certitude simplement différée. Le roman de Robbe-Grillet, au contraire, est l'impossibilité radicale de jamais combler[26] cette lacune autrement que par des hypothèses.

Just as critics of modern self-reflexive texts concentrate solely on literary works even though inner duplications are replete in a self-conscious genre like detective fiction, critics of modern enigmatic texts restrict themselves to the literary without a side glance at the popular. This is very unusual in view of the fact that such enigmatic novels as *Sanctuary*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, *Les Gommes*, *Le Voyeur*, *The Lime Twig*, Murdoch's *The Unicorn*, Aquin's *Trou de mémoire* or Duras' *Moderato cantabile* have, like the detective story, a crime as the main omission. We believe that one viable approach to the examination of omissions in Robbe-Grillet (or other modern authors from Faulkner to Duras) would surely be via the field of detective fiction. It would be worthwhile, for instance, to follow the development and recent rehandling of omissions in such *nouveau roman* authors as Michel Butor, Claude Simon or Marguerite Duras. The main omission in Butor's *L'Emploi du temps* (a novel built on the principle of the prototypical *mise en abyme* detective story *Meurtre de Bleston*) is due essentially to Revel's impossible task of having the time of his adventure in Bleston coincide with the time of his writing about himself and the city. The secondary gaps or holes in his journal entries attest to the narrator-writer-reader's failure to reach full comprehension of any event:

> Dans le texte daté du jeudi 3 juillet que je lisais hier, j'ai décelé une importante lacune, due sans doute à l'heure tardive qu'il était quand j'en suis arrivé au passage dans lequel il faut

> insérer cet incident, et plus profondément au fait que sa véritable liaison avec ce fragment de mon aventure que je m'efforçais alors de fixer ne m'était pas encore apparente.
>
> ... cet ensemble de pages qui sera inévitablement insuffisant, inévitablement lacunaire, entre autres raisons parce que je n'arriverai pas à dire tout ce que je voudrais sur ma dernière visite aux tapisseries du Musée ...[27]

Coincidentally, Butor entered into a stimulating discussion on the topic of gaps in detective fiction, more precisely on gaps in L'Emploi du temps, in a recent interview:

> In a detective novel you know at the end what really happened, excepting some very sophisticated ones where you are given two possibilities, or more; in a book like that you don't know what happened exactly and, of course, in life generally you don't know what happened exactly. Reality is not a continuous thing; it is full of holes .... We fill the gaps of reality with fiction.
>
> When Revel does his writing, it is also full of gaps; and the book is finished with a hole: the last day of February in a leap year. ... it is a hole in the story; so the book is at the same time closed and open. ... Revel's experience is full of gaps, and his recollections are full of gaps; but it is only very slowly that he becomes conscious of that fact, only very slowly that he tries to fill the gaps.[28]

When we examine Robbe-Grillet's Les Gommes, the entire story of Dupont's suicide can be judged excludable or an 'espace dilatoire' since, as the author explains in a preface, the crime was not actually performed until a day later or as it were, the investigation preceding the crime (the narrative itself) is "en trop": "Car le livre est justement le récit des vingt-quatre heures qui s'écoulent entre ce coup de pistolet et cette mort, le temps que la balle a mis pour parcourir trois ou quatre mètres — vingt-quatre heures "en trop"."[29] For the detectives Fabius, Laurent and Wallas, the major omission they have to contend with centers on Dupont — was his death really a suicide or might it have been a murder? Laurent, in the story, is pictured as an armchair detective closeted in his office and perturbed with suspicions and possible interpretations of the known facts about the case. Wallas, on the other hand, more inclined to action than to reflection, wanders aimlessly about the city until so weary that he enters the Dupont home. To more fully understand the procedure of hypothesis-making and how it is employed by a character to fill in the major omission, let us focus our attention on the much neglected figure of Laurent. This commissioner should be given credit for having disentangled the mystery by positing suppositions that correctly closed the mystery had Wallas not intervened and destroyed his postulation by committing the crime:

> Si l'on ne retrouve pas la trace de l'assassin,
> c'est parce que Daniel Dupont n'a pas été assassiné;
> or il est impossible de reconstituer son suicide de
> façon cohérente... ... Et si Dupont n'était pas mort?
> ...
> Dupont n'est pas mort; il suffisait d'y penser.
> (p. 245)

The whole procedure of imagining hypotheses to arrive at a resolution is very visible in a few passages of this novel. One such case for example depicts Laurent's fabrication of probable explications to eradicate the major problem. While constructing his theories, his thoughts move freely — either forward, in reverse, bifurcating or even erasing — to form a labyrinthine system of possibilities (an exteriorization of this oscillating movement of the mind would be Wallas' random walking and retracing of steps until he is genuinely lost in the "boulevard circulaire."):

> Ici Laurent s'arrête; il y a toujours quelque chose
> qui n'est pas clair: Dupont est-il mort sur le coup,
> ou non?

> Supposons qu'il se soit seulement blessé: ...
>
> Et en admettant que le revolver se soit enrayé, ...
>
> Par contre, s'il avait réussi à se tuer tout à fait, ...
>
> Il est possible que Dupont lui-même ait recommandé cette précaution ...
>
> Il est déjà étonnant que Dupont, ou Juard, ait adopté ...
>
> Il y a bien une autre hypothèse: ...
>
> Il y a toujours quelque chose qui ne va pas: ...
>
> Et l'on revient à l'hypothèse de l'échec ...
>
> Le commissaire Laurent sait bien que, maintenant, il va recommencer encore une fois tous ses échafaudages, car c'est justement cette solution qui lui déplaît le plus. (pp. 143-146) (we underline)

The technique of repetition is implied in the elaboration of a series of formal conjectures as the one presented above. And since Laurent always reaches the same conclusion of "l'échec" or that Dupont is still alive, he is forced to continually review and scrutinize his whole series or system of suppositions. This exhaustive recalling gives rise to another type of repetition — the theory must be recapitulated and re-examined in extenso for possible errors, misinterpretations or blanks.

The foregoing system of hypotheses with its strict formal enunciation of a specific problem followed by a complete listing of probabilities is quite recognizable by its format. (It is of course the format of the logical deductions in conventional detective fiction and the methodical organization of Borges' assumptions in essays and ficciones.) Apart from this formal construction of a problem — hypotheses — plausible solution, there are in Les Gommes a few instances of less formal introductions of hypotheses and these are more difficult to comprehend at a first reading. A great stumbling-block that impedes a reader's ability to identify these less formal conjectures (and the stumbling-block grows sharper in Robbe-Grillet's ensuing novels) is caused by the author's mode of releasing the conjectures in the present tense. These suppositious actions are described in the novel as if they are happening without making any distinction between the unfolding of the 'real' action and the fabrications or speculations. Thus, the 'real' story and the 'imaginary' or 'fictitious' stories function on the same plane. We observe this phenomenon of explicitly fictional narratives within the 'real' narrative, for instance, when Laurent imagines to whom Dupont might have written a letter informing others about his suicide plans. To be sure, this is simply Laurent conjecturing possible means of explaining the mystery, however, the reader has the distinct impression that these possibilities are part of the action:

> Il s'arrête devant sa table de travail et jette un coup d'oeil aux lettres qu'il vient d'écrire: une pour Roy-Dauzet, une pour Juard ... pour qui encore? Une pour sa femme, peut-être? Non; et celle qu'il adresse au ministre a sans doute été postée la veille...
>
> Il s'arrête devant sa table de travail et jette un dernier coup d'oeil à cette lettre qu'il vient d'écrire au docteur Juard. Elle est claire et persuasive; elle donne toutes les explications nécessaires pour le camouflage de son suicide en assassinat. (p. 142)
>
> Il s'arrête devant sa table de travail et jette un dernier coup d'oeil à cette lettre qu'il vient d'écrire, pour un confrère belge qui s'intéresse à ses théories. C'est une lettre claire et sèche; elle donne toutes les explications nécessaires. Peut-être, quand il aura dîné, ajoutera-t-il un mot plus chaleureux. (p. 173)

Again, as Laurent dramatizes possible scenarios to make the mystery not as reticent, these less formal hypotheses may be collocated to form a pattern of similarity and variance.

To illustrate the tradition from which Robbe-Grillet stems, let us peruse for a moment the suppositions that create patterns of repetition in Faulkner's novels, for instance in Absalom, Absalom!. Faulkner's technique prefigures in many ways the French author's system of less formal conjectures yet using, for the most part, the subjunctive mood of the formal postulations. Since no relatives, friends or witnesses know with absolute certainty intimate facts about the Sutpen family and ultimately Charles Bon's murder, the reader is led inexorably to fictional recreations of determining episodes in their life. Indeed, the entire novel revolves around a few important events that are always being reviewed by different voices. A good example of an event clouded in mystery and teeming with uncertainty and imprecision concerns the big wedding. Mr. Compson tells Quentin his oral account of the possible reasons that could patch up this secondary gap:

> Of the two men, it was Sutpen who desired the big wedding, the full church and all the ritual. I have this from something your grandfather let drop one day and which he doubtless had from Sutpen himself in the same accidental fashion,... Mr. Coldfield apparently intended to use the church into which he had invested a certain amount of sacrifice and doubtless self-denial and certainly actual labor and money for the sake of what might be called a demand balance of spiritual solvency, exactly as he would have used a cotton gin in which he considered himself to have incurred either interest or responsibility, ... Perhaps his wanting a small wedding was due to ... or perhaps it was some innate sense of delicacy and fitness ... But it was not due to ... He might not have gone out of his way to keep Sutpen in jail, but doubtless the best possible moral fumigation which Sutpen could have received at the time in the eyes of his fellow citizens was the fact that Mr. Coldfield signed his bond ... [30]

Confronted with such a text as Absalom, Absalom! where every sentence is an allegation, not an assertion, it is difficult if not impossible for a reader to orientate himself: he must continually infer, speculate, imagine. A reader cannot gloss over a text that abounds in expressions like "perhaps," "maybe," "apparently," "doubtless," "might have," "could have," but must struggle with the probable meanings of every conjecture. In short, the reader not only stops at every allegation but scans between the lines. This effort on the part of the reader forces him to artfully reconstruct or recompose _mutatis mutandis_ the narrative for himself.

Robbe-Grillet substantiates his idea about inserting in a text hypotheses in the present tense by referring to the actual situation of a trial or police interrogation, or by extension, to a detective interviewing suspects. At a trial or interrogation, false suppositions and contradictory conjectures, are formulated, inspected, reviewed, accepted or rejected with the same 'reality,' the same _objectivité_, as tangible data. The judge or police chief weighs indiscriminately the imaginary and the factual. Robbe-Grillet's subtle argument and comparison from his 'preface' to _L'Année dernière à Marienbad_ is very enlightening for our purposes:

> Ayant admis le souvenir, on admet sans peine l'imaginaire, et personne non plus ne proteste, même dans les salles de quartier, contre ces scènes policières ou de cour d'assises, où l'on _voit_ une hypothèse concernant les circonstances du crime, une hypothèse fausse aussi bien, faite par le juge d'instruction dans sa tête, ou en paroles; et l'on voit ensuite de la même façon sur l'écran, lors des dépositions des différents témoins, dont certains mentent, d'autres fragments de scènes, plus ou moins contradictoires, plus ou moins vraisemblables, mais qui tous sont présentés avec la même qualité d'image, le même réalisme, la même présence, la même objectivité. Et de même encore si l'on nous montre une scène future, que l'un des personnages imagine, etc.
>
> Que sont, en somme, toutes ces images? Ce sont des _imaginations_; une imagination, si elle est assez vive, est toujours au présent.[31]

This mingling of the imaginary or the "hypothèse objectivée" (to use Robbe-Grillet's term) with the 'real,' all in the present tense, appears in its embryonic form in Les Gommes. Robbe-Grillet's further explorations in this direction resulted in the more complex and ambiguous narratives and scenarios La Jalousie or Dans le labyrinthe and L'Année dernière à Marienbad or L'Immortelle. In the eyes of Robbe-Grillet, this fusion of "le vrai, le faux et le faire croire" is consonant with the salient preoccupations of many modern novelists:

> Le vrai, le faux et le faire croire sont devenus plus ou moins le sujet de toute oeuvre moderne ...
>
> Tout se passe même comme si le faux — c'est-à-dire à la fois le possible, l'impossible, l'hypothèse, le mensonge, etc. — était devenu l'un des thèmes privilégiés de la fiction moderne ...[32]

Mathias' obsessions about a certain type of crime initiate repetitions in the first loop of Le Voyeur. These repetitions prepare or anticipate the murder. It is the murder of Jacqueline, this unknown blank or fissure at the center of the novel, which sets in motion the other series of repetitions in the second loop. We are concerned only with the repetitions after the crime and how they pretend to close the major omission. Mathias feels threatened by the fact that someone may have been a spectator to the crime, in other words, his problem resides in proving to himself: did anyone actually see me at noon on the cliffs? Did Maria, Julien, or others on the island see anything? This problem causes Mathias to always be cautious in his speech and to be very vigilant and wary of everyone (and in turn, everyone is suspicious of this strange 'voyageur').[33] On the one hand, Mathias imagines and refines his alibis which will furnish a good 'story' or fiction about his noon hour activities — visiting the Marek farm —, and on the other hand, he incessantly goes over his day's itinerary to uncover any possible hole or mistake that could incriminate him. All these gushes of recapitulation are undertaken with a probable witness in mind. Considering _Le Voyeur_ in this fashion is quite different from most critical endeavors which ultimately are confused about the novel's title. The title, in our 'learned' opinion, relates to Mathias' problem of who has seen him and underlines the reason for all his conjectures, falsifications and recapitulations.

Mathias, of course, is fully cognizant of what has happened during the noon hour. Unlike a detective who tries to fill in correctly the major omission of the crime, a presumed murderer will suppress his knowledge and try to close the gap with pretense, deception and alibis. Whenever Mathias, absorbed in his process of recapitulation, arrives anywhere near the unmentionable point, his thoughts reach excruciating heights of exasperation. He will abruptly stop his recital, unable to go any further — he will advance with trepidation up to the edge of the hiatus, circle around the omission, and then retreat to safer ground:

> la photographie, le sentier qui descend, le creux sur la falaise à l'abri du vent, secret, tranquille, isolé comme par les plus épaisses murailles... comme par les plus épaisses murailles... la table ovale au centre de la pièce, la toile cirée aux petites fleurs multicolores, la pression des doigts sur la fermeture, le couvercle qui bascule en arrière comme mû par un ressort, l'agenda noir, les prospectus, le cadre en métal brillant, la photographie où l'on voit... la photographie, où l'on voit la photographie, la photographie, la photographie, la photographie...
> (p. 142)
>
> Mais n'y trouvant pas la pelote [dans les poches de sa canadienne] , il s'était alors souvenu...

> Il s'était souvenu qu'il ne l'avait plus sur lui.
> (p. 196)

> l'aller et retour jusqu'à la ferme — y compris la petite réparation à la bicyclette devant la porte close — et l'aller et retour jusqu'au bord de la falaise, y compris... (p. 248)

> Il ignorait même que ce fût justement l'endroit où la fillette était tombée... tombée... tombée... Il s'arrêta. (p. 264)

The style with which Robbe-Grillet forays into the sensitive area of the crime and displays how "le meurtre est en creux dans Le Voyeur" merits closer attention. First, we observe the author's felicitous use of elliptical punctuation to manifest what is unutterable. Secondly, the repetition of key words in one order and then in its reverse order reflects very well the thought process itself surveying what Butor had called "l'étude de ses alentours." And thirdly, we notice Robbe-Grillet's choice of the exact word 'creux' to describe the place of the crime: "à cet endroit de la falaise — dans le creux où elle mettait ses moutons à paître" (p. 137) "le creux sur la falaise à l'abri du vent." (p. 142) This word 'creux' designating the place of the crime and/or the omission is a superb example of a word as inner duplication or self-reflection and also a brilliant instance of equivoque. From a technical standpoint, Robbe-Grillet's production of 'le creux' and its contours in Le Voyeur is one of the most striking and memorable in modern literature.

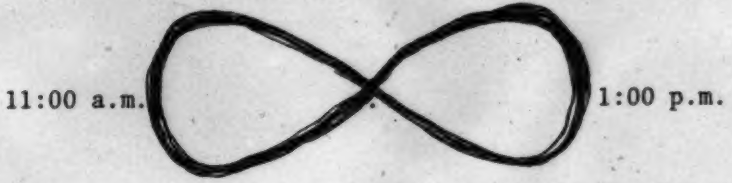
As in Les Gommes, where Laurent imagined hypotheses that could penetrate the suicide-murder, Mathias also gathers suppositions that might calm his qualms about the possibility of witnesses. The majority of conjectures in Le Voyeur are expressed as formal hypotheses where the problem and its procedure of disentanglement are clearly catalogued. One of Mathias' longest enumeration of hypotheses involves a likely suspect. Two questions disturb Mathias with respect to the victim's sister: which route did Maria Leduc take in order to find him and why did she want to see him? In his imagination, Mathias screens through all the possible roads and short cuts that Maria could have chosen in her pursuit. This mind-riveting system of formal contradictory conjectures extends for many pages in the novel and culminates in one of Mathias' many weavings and interweavings of his "emploi du temps." [34] We should cite a few tangents of this system of deduction which ultimately fails in reassuring Mathias:

> Maria, pour venir au hameau des Roches-Noires, avait dû passer sur la route pendant que Mathias était chez le couple .... (p. 134)
>
> elle ne pouvait avoir emprunté le même sentier que lui, mais un raccourci sans doute, ... (p. 134)
>
> Ainsi Maria roulait déjà vers la falaise avant qu'il ne soit lui-même remonté sur sa propre bicyclette. ... (p. 135)
>
> Elle était donc venue par un autre chemin. ... Grâce aux ondulations de la lande, il semblait peu probable — il était impossible — il était impossible — il était impossible qu'elle l'eût aperçu d'un sentier à l'autre, elle allant, lui revenant. Là-bas, dans le creux abrité où broutaient les brebis, elle l'avait à coup sûr manqué de peu. ... Il paraissait difficile qu'un nouveau raccourci existât. ... (p. 136)
>
> Mathias, qui venait de négliger cette dernière possibilité au cours de toutes ses déductions précédentes, craignit sur le moment que la construction entière ne fût à reprendre. (p. 136)

Another interior debate flares up about an even more intimidating suspect. Mathias examines every aspect of the menacing problem — was Julien at the Marek farm or not? Both possibilities hold grave dangers for the murderer: if at the Marek farm (as he should have been), Julien knows perfectly well that Mathias was not there; if not at the Marek farm, Julien may have wandered in the vicinity of the cliffs that noon hour. Mathias' inquiry into the whereabouts of the "voyeur" so engrosses him that he devises a new spectrum of formal hypotheses. These strict postulations terminate in a host of unanswerable questions. And on the eve of his departure from the island, Mathias comes to the conclusion that the odds are against him, since Julien, in all likelihood, saw everything and has enough proof to denounce him.[35]

> Si le garçon était véritablement dans la cour ou le hangar, en cette fin de matinée, il savait très bien qu'aucun voyageur n'avait frappé à la porte. D'autre part, s'il n'y était pas, et qu'il voulût seulement le faire croire à son père, ... (p. 244)
>
> Tout en reprenant en sens inverse la petite route, entre les troncs tordus des pins, le voyageur ressassait dans son esprit les multiples aspects du problème. (p. 246)

Apart from instituting an exhaustive list of formal hypotheses to investigate specific problems as the suspects Maria or Julien, there is in Le Voyeur another operation based on repetitions and permutations. This other operation consists of Mathias' constant reassessment and retrospection or analepse of his activities of the day.[36] These recapitulations and calculations about the definite time of his every visit or encounter are deemed necessary by Mathias to co-ordinate his time of the blind spot or fictional time with the verifiable time of the morning and afternoon. This is why to strangers as Robin or Julien, Mathias feels compelled to establish his itinerary where "il en vint tout naturellement à faire le récit complet de sa journée." (p. 181) It is significant that most of Mathias' recapitulations emerge directly from and complement his system of formal hypotheses. Once the formal conjectures are painstakingly pondered on, Mathias repeats his time schedule to assure himself that his alibis coincide with the time lapse or noon hour gap. His calculations, needless to say, always fall short of their goal. However much the time between eleven and one o'clock is stretched out in a forward or retrograde direction, there is forever this isthmus or line at the median of the 'creux':



(The exteriorization of this pattern of repetition or incessant re-evaluation of the time schedule is made very visible by Mathias' physical meanderings on the island and his becoming lost in the double circumvolution of the paths.)

To illustrate these computations of his time schedule and the problematics of the hiatus, we note how the formal hypotheses about Maria conclude with Mathias' enumeration of his displacements up to the Leduc home. In the other important retrospection or analepse, Mathias tabulates a longer period of time to account for or bridge the gap. These successive repetitions of his itinerary between eleven and one, perfused with blanks, only too patently expose to Mathias the 'creux' that cannot be dispelled or mended in his own fabricated story:

> Mathias se mit en devoir de récapituler ses déplacements depuis son départ du café-tabac-garage, sur la machine louée. Il était à ce moment-là onze heures dix ou onze heures un quart. Etablir ensuite la chronologie des stations ne présentait pas de difficulté notable; ... .
>
> Pour commencer, le trajet jusqu'au premier arrêt étant à peu près négligeable, on pouvait fixer celui-ci à onze heures quinze exactement.
>
> Il s'agissait de la dernière maison à la sortie du bourg. Mme Leduc lui avait ouvert presque aussitôt. ... la photographie, le sentier qui descend, le creux sur la falaise à l'abri du vent, secret, tranquille, isolé comme

> par les plus épaisses murailles... (pp. 141-142)

> Après s'être tellement acharné à la confection de cet alibi [la fausse visite chez la ferme Marek] — comme s'il eût été de nature à le laver de tout soupçon — Mathias s'apercevait à présent de son insuffisance. Le séjour sur la falaise avait duré bien trop longtemps pour qu'on pût le résorber tout entier de cette manière. Un trou demeurait toujours dans l'emploi du temps.
>
> Mathias se mit en devoir de récapituler ses arrêts et déplacements depuis son départ du café-tabac-garage. Il était à ce moment-là onze heures dix ou onze heures un quart. Le trajet jusqu'à la maison Leduc étant à peu près négligeable, on pouvait fixer l'arrivée chez la veuve à onze heures quinze exactement. ...
>
> Pour réduire autant que possible la différence, Mathias remonta vers ce même point à partir de l'instant où il avait regardé sa montre: une heure sept, au café des Roches-Noires. ...
>
> Le temps anormal, en trop, suspect, inexplicable, atteignait quarante minutes — sinon cinquante.
>
> (we underline) (pp. 247-248)

In his final retrospection, Mathias simply traces the figure eight in his journal as ostensible sign of his re-examination of the major gap:

> Il tourna une feuille en arrière, se retrouva au mardi et reprit une fois de plus la succession imaginaire des minutes, entre onze heures du matin et une heure de l'après-midi. Il se contenta de raffermir avec la pointe de son crayon, la boucle mal formée d'un chiffre huit. Tout était en ordre désormais. (p. 279)

Although Maria and especially Julien are the two most vexatious suspects, they are inevitably not the only individuals who torment Mathias. Immediately after the crime, as evinced for instance in his conversation on the road with Mme Marek, Mathias is on the alert for any sign or sound that may implicate him in the murder. Even with the less threatening situations, the conjectures designed to clarify the difficulty are brought forward systematically and in the conditional tense. From each small mystery or inscrutable situation radiates a cluster of speculations. The following example, where Mathias is restricted by his position, demonstrates the presence of these minor formal conjectures in Le Voyeur.

> ... l'un des deux hommes dit quelque chose à son collègue — que Mathias ne comprit pas. Des syllabes se reformèrent après coup, dans son esprit, qui ressemblaient à 'falaise' et — plus incertaines — au verbe 'lier.' Il tendit l'oreille; mais personne ne parlait plus.
>
> Le voyageur trouva bizarre qu'ils se soient tus ainsi depuis son arrivée, ... Peut-être les avait-il dérangés ... ? Il tenta d'en imaginer le sujet. ... comme si leurs paroles risquaient de le concerner lui-même, à leur insu. (pp. 130-131)

The select system of formal hypotheses which abounds in Le Voyeur will be very minimal in Robbe-Grillet's next novel. However, the procedure of limiting the position of a character or narrator so that he cannot hear or see clearly (as shown above) along with the technique of formulating an "hypothèse objectivée" or a supposition in the present tense, which we alluded to in Les Gommes, will prove indispensable to the author in the construction of La Jalousie.

We remember that Robbe-Grillet had attested to a rising degree of experimentation and complexity in his use of omissions and techniques of repetition and conjecture from Les Gommes to La Jalousie — "une approche croissante de ce qu'est ce vide central de l'oeuvre." Already in Le Voyeur, the reader discerns that his aim of elucidating the major omission clashes with the character-narrator's intentions of only pretending to fill in the gap with his alibis and recapitulations. Thus, the gap remains nebulous, indeed nearly incomprehensible, for the reader. There is an even more pronounced contradiction in La Jalousie. Robbe-Grillet has adumbrated that the main omission in this novel pertains to the narrator "en creux" in the narrative. From the reader's standpoint, we agree with Robbe-Grillet that the central gap relates to the concealment of the narrator, but when we consider the narrator himself, his problem is not concerned with his identity but with the probable relation between A... and the neighbour and especially their secretive visit to the city. Consequently, in La Jalousie, for the narrator, there is only the mystery of A...'s possible infidelity but for the reader, there is the additional mystery of the narrator. In chapter four, we briefly brought to attention the concealment of the narrator, in this section, we will examine the problem that this narrator in turn must contend with.

The narrator's distressful problem involves essentially one task — interpretation. The husband must decide if what he observes is limpid and has only one meaning or if what he sees is murky or ambiguous and deceiving and therefore can be understood otherwise. The uncertainty that lingers in his interpretation fans out to entail every word, whisper, gesture, or glance between his wife and Franck. The dilemma of a possible intimacy between A and Franck totally crushes the narrator-husband; he remains puzzled about actions like: Did A shrewdly arrange the chairs to have Franck next to her and himself in the distance? Did A purposely forget the ice so as to be alone with Franck? Did A furtively place her blue letter in Franck's pocket? What was written in this letter? Was it an invitation to meet clandestinely? ... All these perplexities may be viewed as A's cultivation of a relationship which will culminate in the all-absorbing mystery about her absence from home. Whereas the husband could observe his wife when she was alone or with her neighbour, the mystery intensifies with their absence from the plantation. Their visit to the city haunts his imagination. Does A accompany Franck for errands or for something else...? Did the car really break down or was that a handy alibi? Did they spend the night together? When they returned, did she bend to kiss Franck or to pick up her parcels? This enticing mystery of the visit will remain their secret: "Ils n'ont d'ailleurs jamais reparlé de cette journée, de cet accident, de cette nuit — du moins lorsqu'ils ne sont pas seuls ensemble." (p. 198) [37]

To inspect and interpret the mystery of A and Franck's probable liaison, the narrator-husband obsessively mulls over every detail of the visit: the discreet preparations, the journey itself, the return after the overnight stay. His mind interconnects randomly what is apprehended by the senses, especially _l'oeil et l'oreille_. [38] This welter of sensory data incite him to re-examine minutely the actions and to imagine situations. The narrator's thoughts, therefore, move freely from sight to sound to the imaginative reconstruction of things seen or heard. The mind is like a _film intérieur_ which interweaves without distinction observations, dreams and memories. [39] From this reworking in the narrator's imagination, it is impossible to distinguish between a description of the 'real' scenes and the reconstructions, reminiscences, or conjectures elicited by these scenes and recorded in the present tense.

Because these thoughts and reveries are free-flowing and amorphous, it is difficult for an author to channel them as the governing principle or structure in a narrative. In a way, Robbe-Grillet was forced to restrict the 'myriad impressions' pressing on the mind by choosing to concentrate on an obsessive narrator. Robbe-Grillet explores narrators in _Le Voyeur_ and _La Jalousie_ who are obsessed about one very definite problem. As expounded by the author, each narrator is "le moins neutre, le moins impartial des hommes: engagé ... toujours dans une aventure passionnelle des plus obsédantes, au point de déformer souvent sa vision et de produire chez lui des imaginations proches du délire." [40] This selection of an obsessive mind was mandatory for the composition of the narrative: the obsessiveness or fixation is the essential factor in the creation of the pattern of piétinement, circularity or repetition. Robbe-Grillet needed an obsessive mind so that the mental flow would focus repeatedly on specific objects and scenes and thereby form a structure or identifiable pattern of repetition in the novel. We argue that Robbe-Grillet had to resort to a narrator with an obsessive mind in order to gather or compress the flow of thoughts and dreams around a presiding pattern. On the other hand, Bruce Morrissette and Jonathan Culler contend that the hotchpotch or pell-mell in the narrative can be understood by the fact that the novel is dealing with a troubled mind: "The most incoherent text could be explained by assuming that it is the speech of a delirious narrator." [41] A delirious narrator does not necessarily produce an incoherent text. Rather, this type of narrator creates, precisely because of his obsession, coherence and order through repetition. The obsessive mind holds a very important creative function.

The husband's persistent re-examination of a few areas of acute mystery or gaps is precisely what gives rise to the formation of identical patterns of repetition and some reiterations with slight modifications in La Jalousie. All these repetitions or analepses répétitives engender a text whose structural appearance is best represented by spirals, coils, labyrinths: "courbes," "boucles," "croissants," "rosaces," "écheveaux." [42] Such a narrative engineered to propel itself through imaginary sequences is one of the finest examples of the modern movement towards "production" of a text rather than "reproduction" or the world of the imagination and self-reflection in lieu of the imitation of exterior reality.[43]

The narrator's greatest disadvantage in his attempt to uncover the mystery is that he has to be unobstrusive and always remain on the periphery. Simply stated: if this narrator could see and hear everything, he would not have a problem on his hands. As a furtive observer taking precautions to be "soigneusement effacé," the husband is very constrained by his limited vision and incapacity of overhearing.[44] The narrator of La Jalousie strongly experiences, in a manner similar to Borges' Recabarren in "El fin," 'les restrictions de champ' of vision and hearing. (The observer in Borges' story, a paralyzed old man lying on his cot and scanning the horizon, can only hear the strumming of a guitar, bits of conversation, and can only see the horse in the distant horizon, the approaching figure with a large hat, and parts of the fatal fight. This restrictive position and its inadequacies are underlined by the author's repetition of the verbs 'to hear' and 'to see'.)[45] Of the many difficulties pertaining to the circumscribed position of the narrator in Robbe-Grillet's novel, the most disturbing is l'encadrement or le découpage.[46] The narrator is forever hampered from obtaining a complete picture of a scene: whenever he peers through the tarnished window, the venetian blind, the glaring sunlight, the dim shade ..., he gains but a partial view. This oblique grasp of scenes perceived or confidences overheard obliges the narrator to turn these fragmentary pieces in his mind — to scrutinize them further, to fill them out, and then to reinterpret them. And the more incriminating and mysterious the scene, the more it will relentlessly haunt the narrator's obsessive mind.

The title *La Jalousie*, apart from its other meaningful resonances, can be interpreted as referring directly to the technique of *découpage* or of producing omissions or gaps in a narrative. The blades of the screen or blind obstruct vision: each line cuts or intersects to form a shattered picture or puzzle with areas permitting decipherment and other areas emitting shadows or blanks. For example, in the following passages describing the narrator positioned behind the blind, the *découpage* of his vision is a *mise en abyme* of the author's technique of constructing "des vides," "des creux," "des fissures" in the narrative:[47]

> [la fenêtre] — permet d'observer, par les fentes obliques entre les lames de bois; *un découpage en raies lumineuses parallèles* de la table et des fauteuils, sur la terrasse. (pp. 76-77)
>
> L'intérieur de celle-ci [la chambre de A...] est éclairé, mais les jalousies sont bien closes: *il ne filtre entre les lames, çà et là, que de maigres traces de lumière*. (p. 209)
>
> La silhouette de A..., *découpée en lamelles horizontales par la jalousie*, derrière la fenêtre de sa chambre, a maintenant disparu. (p. 41)
> (we underline)

And on the night of his long vigil, as the dusk invades the horizon, the narrator can no longer remain posted at the window. He is compelled to close the blind: "Par les fentes d'une jalousie entrouverte — un peu tard — il est évidemment impossible de distinguer quoi que ce soit." (p. 171) The action of shutting the blind dramatically represents the enigmatic visit to the city as the main absence.[48] In truth, Robbe-Grillet has insinuated that his novelistic art is just as much a *découpage* as an *écriture*.[49]

In his investigation to dissipate the mystery of the relationship of A and Franck, the narrator-husband is painfully curtailed. Many obstructions interfere with his act of spying or eavesdropping. These obstacles force the narrator, uncertain of his sensory acumen, to conjecture about what he may or may not have seen or heard. These encumbrances heighten the mystery and, in order to clarify them, the observer must imagine hypotheses. A great many of these assumptions, intimately connected with the restrictive position of the narrator, take the mode of a less formal system of hypotheses. For example, because of a dent in the left window (one of his favorite vantage points), the viewer obtains a distorted perspective — the banana plantation intrudes upon the immediate vicinity of the courtyard and the house. This imperfection in the glass demands that the narrator-witness reconsider and re-evaluate in his mind the scattered bits of a scene, as in a puzzle. The narrator repeats and revises his impression of an object or incident to restore some order and to acquire a glimmer of understanding. We shall cite four instances that brilliantly expose the technique of repetition with significant alteration and the exhaustion of informal conjectures in the present tense resulting from defective vision. These four repetitions pertain to the climactic moment of the couple's return from their trip to the city. It is highly irritating for the narrator to be constrained to perceive their arrival from the faulty left window, or to see them through a glass, darkly:

> Dans le battant gauche, le paysage réfléchi est plus brilliant quoique plus sombre. Mais il est distordu par les défauts du verre, des taches de verdure circulaires ou en forme de croissants, de la teinte des bananiers, se promenant au milieu de la cour devant les hangars.
>
> Entamée par un de ces anneaux mobiles de feuillage, la grosse conduite-intérieure bleue demeure néanmoins bien reconnaissable, ainsi que la robe de A..., debout près de la voiture.

> Elle est penchée vers la portière. Si la vitre en a été baissée — ce qui est vraisemblable — A... peut avoir introduit son visage dans l'ouverture au-dessus des coussins. Elle risque en se redressant de défaire sa coiffure contre les bords du cadre et de voir ses cheveux se répandre, à la rencontre du conducteur resté au volant. (pp. 57-58)

> Mais dans le panneau de gauche, plus sombre quoique plus brillant, l'image réfléchie est franchement distordue, des taches de verdure circulaires ou en forme de croissants, de la couleur des bananiers, se promenant au milieu de la cour devant les hangars.
>
> La grosse conduite-intérieure bleue de Franck, qui vient de s'arrêter là, se trouve elle-même entamée par un de ces anneaux mobiles de feuillage, ainsi, maintenant, que la robe blanche de A... descendue la première de la voiture.
>
> Elle se penche vers la portière fermée. Si la vitre en a été baissée — ce qui est vraisemblable — A... peut avoir introduit son visage dans l'ouverture au-dessus des coussins. Elle risque en se redressant de déranger l'ordonnance de sa coiffure contre les bords du cadre et de voir ses cheveux, d'autant plus prompts à se défaire qu'ils sont fraîchement lavés, se répandre à la rencontre du conducteur resté au volant. (pp. 74-75)

> Et la voiture de Franck entre en scène, amenée dans la vitre avec naturel par la conversation. C'est une grosse conduite-intérieure bleue, de fabrication américaine, dont la carrosserie — quoique poussiéreuse — semble neuve. Le moteur également est en très bon état: jamais il ne cause d'ennuis à son propriétaire.
>
> Ce dernier n'a pas quitté le volant. Seule sa passagère est descendue sur le sol caillouteux de la cour. Elle porte des chaussures fines à très hauts talons .... Elle s'est immobilisée contre la portière avant et se penche vers les coussins de molesquine grise, par-dessus la vitre baissée au maximum.
>
> La robe blanche à large jupe disparaît presque jusqu'à la taille. La tête, les bras et le haut du buste, qui s'engagent dans l'ouverture, empêchent en même temps de voir ce qui se passe à l'intérieur. A... sans doute est en train de rassembler les emplettes qu'elle vient de faire, pour les emporter avec soi. ...
>
> Après un nouveau temps d'arrêt, les épaules émergent à leur tour en pleine lumière, puis le cou, et la tête avec sa lourde chevelure noire dont la coiffure trop mouvante est un peu défaite, la main droite enfin qui tient seulement, par sa ficelle, un très petit paquet vert de forme cubique. (pp. 115-116)

> Dans le battant gauche, ouvert, de la première fenêtre de la salle à manger, au centre du carreau médian, l'image réfléchie de la voiture bleue vient de s'arrêter au milieu de la cour. A... et Franck en descendent en même temps, lui d'un côté, elle de l'autre, par les deux portières avant. A... tient à la main un paquet de très petite taille, de forme incertaine, qui s'efface par instant tout à fait, absorbé par un défaut du verre.
>
> Les deux personnages s'approchent aussitôt l'un de l'autre, devant le capot de la voiture. La silhouette de Franck, plus massive, masque entièrement celle de A..., située par derrière, sur le trajet du même rayon. La tête de Franck s'incline en avant.
>
> Les irrégularités de la vitre faussent le détail du geste. Les fenêtres du salon donneraient, du même spectacle, une vue directe et sous un angle plus commode: les deux personnages placés l'un à côté de l'autre.
>
> Mais ils sont déjà séparés, marchant côte à côte vers la porte d'entrée de la maison, sur le sol caillouteux de la cour. ... (pp. 203-204)

Which one of these four excerpts is the description of the actual arrival of A and Franck? And which ones are *retours en avant*, flashbacks, and *hypothèses objectivées*?[50] Did A leave the car alone as educed in the first three accounts or did she enter the house accompanied by Franck as posited in the last postulation? Each version modifies, amplifies, reduces or retains the essential ingredients of the scene. For instance, there are minor amplifications like A's dress — "la robe de A," "la robe blanche de A," "la robe blanche à large jupe," or minor reductions like the package — "un très petit paquet vert de forme cubique," "un paquet de très petite taille, de forme incertaine." The third excerpt embellishes the scene with a lusciousness of details — the American-made vehicle with a well-functioning motor, the grey cushions, the high-heeled shoes, the sand in the yard. Also, this version presents the action in slow motion and with close-ups as in films. When we compare the versions, all except the third one emphasize the dent in the glass. The last two passages very adroitly reveal to us further obstructions: how the narrator is hindered not only by the defect of the glass but also by either A or Franck's encroaching or overshadowing positions — "La tête, les bras et le haut du buste, qui s'engagent dans l'ouverture, empêchent en même temps de voir ce qui se passe à l'intérieur" and "la silhouette de Franck, plus massive, masque entièrement celle de A..., situé par derrière, sur le trajet du même rayon." This superimposition of obstacles in the path of the narrator's vision creates more distance and ambiguity between the scene and the observer. In short, contrasted with each other, these complementary yet differing passages excellently demonstrate the poetics of repetition and supposition. 'To be sure', the narrator will never deduce what really happened when A or the couple descended from the car. The narrator, like the reader, as Genette indicated, remains in the realm of uncertainty and irreducibility: "la multiplicité des hypothèses contradictoires suggère bien davantage l'insolubilité du problème, et à tout le moins l'incapacité du narrateur à le résoudre." [51]

In his task of assembling incriminating evidence, the distraught narrator is not only curtailed by impaired vision but also hampered by hearing difficulties. While listening to whispers and hushed conversations between A and Franck, much of the language is either inaudible or indistinct to the narrator. This overhearing of only snippets of sound precipitates the avid listener into confusion and casts doubt on the meaning behind the stifled utterances. For instance, the alert narrator cannot grasp the muffled phrase spoken by A to Franck when seated on their respective chairs on the veranda:

> Elle s'appuie de l'autre main au bras du fauteuil et se penche vers lui, si près que leurs têtes sont l'une contre l'autre. Il murmure quelques mots: un remerciement, sans doute. (p. 18)

> Elle s'appuie de l'autre main au bras du fauteuil et se penche vers lui, si près que leurs têtes sont l'une contre l'autre. Il murmure quelques mots: sans doute un remerciement. Mais les paroles se perdent dans le vacarme assourdissant des criquets qui monte de toutes parts. (p. 59)

The second repetition accentuates the difficulty of hearing by including another barrier to interpretation: the chirping of the crickets drowns out the whispers of the probable lovers. And the narrator's doubt and anxiety is expressed by the only modification — "un remerciement, sans doute" "sans doute un remerciement." This inversion leaves the supposition hovering in mid-air.

The narrator is again at a direful disadvantage when he cannot comprehend what is likely very clear to others but a sibylline riddle to him. He is deprived of the inside knowledge that would enable him to read certain hermetic signs, gestures, words and their meaning. There is an excellent illustration of this ignorance in a refrain introduced at the beginning and repeated at the end of the novel. A hums a dance tune which seems to have a special significance for herself and Franck but the narrator is in the dark about this tune and its referent:

> A... fredonne un air de danse, dont les paroles demeurent inintelligibles. Mais Franck les comprend peut-être, s'il les connaît déjà, pour les avoir entendues souvent, peut-être avec elle. C'est peut-être un de ses disques favoris. (pp. 29-30)

> A... fredonne un air de danse, dont les paroles demeurent inintelligibles. C'est peut-être une chanson à la mode, qu'elle a entendue en ville, au rythme de laquelle peut-être elle a dansé. (p. 207)

We acquire another good insight into the narrator's plight as 'intruder' and 'outsider' (these words are to be taken in their pristine quality without any existential residue) when we consider the gleeful episode of A and Franck discussing the African novel which they have both read but which the husband has not. Lacking any knowledge about the book, the narrator-husband cannot make sense out of their spirited dialogue. In recalling these dangling conversations, the narrator, kindled with curiosity, seeks to retrieve the truth by prolonging his series of conjectures. The second passage excellently demonstrates how he desperately reaches an impasse:

> Il [Franck] fait ensuite une allusion, peu claire pour celui qui n'a même pas feuilleté le livre, à la conduite du mari. Sa phrase se termine par 'savoir la prendre' ou 'savoir l'apprendre,' sans qu'il soit possible de déterminer avec certitude de qui il s'agit, ou de quoi. (p. 26)
>
> Il fait ensuite une allusion — peu claire pour celui qui n'a même pas feuilleté le livre — à la conduite du mari, coupable au moins de négligence selon l'avis des deux lecteurs. La phrase se terminait par 'savoir attendre,' ou 'à quoi s'attendre,' ou 'la voir se rendre,' 'là dans sa chambre,' 'le noir y chante,' ou n'importe quoi. (p. 193)

The narrator's development of hypotheses about the equivocal meanings emanating from A and Franck's incoherent dialogue is a tacky problem because his adversaries, apart from imagining alternate actions for the characters in the novel, are also slyly conceiving their own plots and plans about their excursion to the city.

A and Franck's pleasurable diversion of imagining other possible scenarios for the characters in the African novel reflects the narrator's vexing need of imagining possible interpretations for his wife and the neighbour's actions. In short, the proliferation of hypotheses instigated by the African novel is very similar to the proliferation of hypotheses aroused by the probable illicit relation between A and Franck. In this context of the repetition of hypotheses, the African novel can be seen as an inner duplication of La Jalousie (another African novel). The dizzying network of conjectures issuing from the inner African novel (le microtexte) mirrors the outer narrative's (le macrotexte) long list of assumptions:[52]

> Ils déplorent aussi quelquefois les hasards de l'intrigue, disant que "ce n'est pas de chance", et ils construisent alors un autre déroulement probable à partir d'une nouvelle hypothèse, "si ça n'était pas arrivé." D'autres bifurcations possibles se présentent, en cours de route, qui conduisent toutes à des fins différentes. Les variantes sont très nombreuses; les variantes des variantes encore plus. Ils semblent même les multiplier à plaisir, échangeant des sourires, s'excitant au jeu, sans doute un peu grisés par cette prolifération. ... (p. 83)

The technique of repeating formal and less formal hypotheses in La Jalousie is underlined by other inner duplications within the novel. For instance, the song of the native or natives, overheard by the narrator, appears esoteric. The song emanates from a disembodied voice since the singer is unseen or absent and the incomprehensible song is replete with abrupt stops, long silences, repetitions, modifications:

> ... le chant reprend, du côté des hangars. Sans doute est-ce toujours le même poème qui se continue. Si parfois les thèmes s'estompent, c'est pour revenir un peu plus tard, affermis, à peu de chose près identiques. Cependant ces répétitions, ces infimes variantes, ces coupures, ces retours en arrière, peuvent donner lieu à des modifications — bien qu'à peine sensibles — entraînant à la longue fort loin du point de départ. (p. 101)

Again, like the mise en abyme of the African novel, the song of the native is identical to the tangled thought process of the obsessive narrator reflected in the obsessive repetitions and ramifications in La Jalousie.

Nowhere in La Jalousie is the collection or piling up of repetition and supposition more poetic and vibrant than in the scene of Franck's squashing of the much-talked-about centipede. Although it would be fascinating to analyze the major variants of this scene, let it suffice that we point out the radical modification in three key versions. In these passages, the narrator's thoughts originate with the 'real' killing of the centipede and ultimately reach ebullition, where in a fit of rage and jealousy, he imagines the killing of the centipede on a bed in a hotel room:

> La main aux doigts effilés s'est crispée sur la nappe blanche.
> Franck écarte la serviette du mur et, avec son pied, achève d'écraser quelque chose sur le carrelage, contre la plinthe. (p. 97)
>
> La main aux phalanges effilées s'est crispée sur la toile blanche. Les cinq doigts écartés se sont refermés sur eux-mêmes, en appuyant avec tant de force qu'ils ont entraîné la toile avec eux. Celle-ci demeure plissée des cinq faisceaux de sillons convergents, beaucoup plus longs, auxquels les doigts ont fait place. (p. 112)
>
> La main aux phalanges effilées s'est crispée sur le drap blanc. Les cinq doigts écartés se sont refermés sur eux-mêmes, en appuyant avec tant de force qu'ils ont entraîné la toile avec eux: celle-ci demeure plissée de cinq faisceaux de sillons convergents... (p. 166)
> (we underline)

La Jalousie is characterized above all by its conjectures and repetitions with slight but significant modifications.[53] There are very few formal hypotheses in this novel (in contrast to Le Voyeur). However, the night of the narrator's vigil, immured in his home, wandering from room to room, alert for sounds on the highway, waiting first patiently then impatiently for his wife's return, the husband attempts to expose rationally reasons that would account for her absence. It is apropos that this formal hypothesis should be undertaken at the precise time of A's distressing absence or at the moment of the main gap in the narrative. The narrator systematically imagines, as if actually happening in the present, a series of fortuitous events that could explain her delay:[54]

> A... devrait être de retour depuis longtemps. Néanmoins les causes probables de retard ne manquent pas. Mis à part l'accident — jamais exclu — il y a les deux crevaisons successives ... il y a la rupture de quelque connexion électrique ... il y a aussi l'assistance qui ne se refuse pas à un autre chauffeur en difficulté. Il y a les divers aléas retardant le départ lui-même ... , etc..., etc. ... Il y a enfin la fatigue du conducteur, qui lui a fait remettre son retour au lendemain. (pp. 154-155)

Plot, narrative perspective, techniques related to omissions — each is an instrument used to create and co-ordinate the suspense and mystery in a narrative. This final chapter discussed important technical points in operation in detective fiction and their purpose in modern literature. Theorists like Spitzer, Jakobson, Barthes, Genette have quite rightly demanded that the fundamental role of techniques in literature be aired, even entrenched in histories of the discipline —

> ... si l'histoire de la littérature est en définitive l'histoire de ces techniques, ce n'est pas parce que la littérature n'est que technique ... mais parce que la technique est la seule puissance capable de suspendre le sens du monde et de maintenir ouverte la question ...[55]

Anyone who has seen Robbe-Grillet's L'Année dernière à Marienbad will remember the delicate, graceful sculpture of Charles III and his wife in the public garden. The sculpture depicted the husband a little in front of his wife and both looked solemnly and intensely in front of them. The posture of the figures is very mysterious. What are the husband and wife staring at? Why is one hand of each figure outstretched? What are their fingers pointing to?

The marble statue forever keeps the gesture a secret. An impenetrable novel like La Jalousie will also forever keep its secret. And the contemplator of the Charles III statue, like the reader of La Jalousie, will have to be content with approximations — reveries and suppositions about possible meanings and interpretations.

> ... non seulement parce que la statue elle-même est inductrice de sens divers, incertains et cependant nommés (c'est vous, c'est moi, ce sont les dieux antiques, Hélène, Agamemnon, etc.), mais encore parce que le prince et son épouse y désignent du doigt d'une façon certaine un objet incertain (situé dans la fable? dans le jardin? dans la salle?): ceci, disent-ils. Mais quoi, ceci? Toute la littérature est peut-être dans cet anaphorique léger qui tout à la fois désigne et se tait.[56]

We have attempted to 'fill in,' through the study of omissions or reticences, a small area of this fascinating topic of how language can be used to point as well as to keep silent, or again, dire et ne pas dire.[57]

* * *

CONCLUSION

"Literature's magic is worked on us by various artifices, but once the reader finds them out they wear off. Out of this comes the continual need for greater or lesser variations, which may recover a past or prefigure a future."

J. L. Borges *

Borges, echoing the thought of the Russian formalists about the evolution of genres, reminds us of "the continual need for greater or lesser variations" or how the flux and periodical changes in literature can renew worn-out genres. Whenever a literature becomes redundant or stagnant, it can refresh itself by absorbing other genres — 'high' or 'low'. We have just explored how one such branching out to assimilate a popular form has re-invigorated a limb of modern prose fiction. From its inception, the novel has either conflicted with or embraced popular culture. The modern novel, as we know, emerged and developed through interaction with the popular. That this process is still continuing today is a sure sign of the vitality and fertility of the modern novel.

The dynamics of variation applies not only to a synoptic vision of literary history but also to our own approach: how each single work of art is modelled on another. This idea of variation, on which the methodology of our argument is based, implies that there are two texts always to be considered — the model, paradigm or prototext and the narrative that absorbs, imitates and transforms this first text. In this connection, we can speak of every work we have studied, if we understand the term parody in its modern perspective, as a parody of the detective story. Parody is not only a mode of derision and censure but also includes its opposing attribute of praising and paying homage to a work or genre. All our authors have recognized that the detective genre provides, besides hackneyed conventions, intrinsic potentiality and they have tried to exploit this potentiality.

Modern authors have taught us to look differently at detective fiction. Every historical period, carrying its own tastes and values, turns towards other forms and genres for its own special reasons. Formerly, in the nineteenth century, authors like Dickens and Dostoevsky were interested in the detective story for its social documentation of the criminal in an industrialized world or for the "poetry of modern life."[1] Today, contemporary authors like Borges, Nabokov and Robbe-Grillet reckon with the detective genre fundamentally for reasons which diverge totally from those of the previous century. Our authors take delight in the detective tale primarily because it is an artful craft. They see the detective story as a text that abounds in the devising of successful plot strategies, in the contrivance of self-conscious artifices, in the manipulation of enigmas, in short, the detective story as a self-referential anti-mimetic fabrication. In succeeding generations, the detective genre will be appreciated for other yet unknown qualities.

The interest shown by modern authors for popular forms like the detective story should have some beneficial impact on the popular genre itself. The variations on the detective structure instituted by a Nabokov in Lolita or a Pinget in L'Inquisitoire should invite readers to go back to the popular genre to rediscover its properties, especially those amenable to trends in contemporary literature.
Why is it so fashionable to speak of hermeneutic texts, enigmatic narratives, and reader involvement when every detective story from

Baroness Orczy's The Old Man in the Corner to Ross Macdonald's The Drowning Pool effortlessly accomplishes this ideal of reader participation? Why is it so exceptional that there be speculations and inferences formulated by narrators in Borges' "La espera," "Emma Zunz" or "Pedro Salvadores" or in Robbe-Grillet's La Jalousie when detective fiction is constituted primarily by the repetition of hypotheses as in Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express? Why is it so remarkable that there be the inner duplication of a detective novel in Butor's L'Emploi du temps and so distasteful to have one in Christie's The ABC Murders? Why is it so phenomenal that there be a "blind spot" or "incomplete picture" at the heart of The Real Life of Sebastian Knight or a "trou" or "fissure" in Le Voyeur and that major omissions and minor gaps be so inconsequential in detective fiction? [2]

A few brilliant detective writers have made unparalleled contributions not only to the detective genre but their innovations have also penetrated modern literature. Dorothy Sayers and John Dickson Carr, as we saw, ventured to create an open-ended or permanently inconclusive narrative by resorting to the formation of two mutually acceptable resolutions, one bordering on the fantastic, the other restricted to the logical. Hammett and Chandler, with their breakthrough to an objective style, offered detective fiction and literature in general with another means of generating mystification and evasion. Agatha Christie shocked the world of letters by concealing her murderer under the guise of a bystander-narrator. Anthony Berkeley and Boileau-Narcejac, each in his own way, radically shifted or 'inverted' the centre of emphasis of detective fiction from the sjužet to the fabula or the story of the investigation to the story of the criminal or victim. In summary, with respect to plot structure, narrative techniques and techniques of retardation, works like The Burning Court, The Big Sleep, The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, Trial and Error, and Les Diaboliques have made outstanding contributions to the development of the classical detective genre and its many sub-genres.

At the beginning of this century, Régis Messac concluded his analysis of detective fiction by expressing the hope that the genre would be taken seriously by future generations, however, he was not overly optimistic about the genre's prospects: "... il se pourrait que les romans policiers ne soient jamais autre chose que ce que les romans de chevalerie étaient pour Mme de Sévigné ou pour La Fontaine, un amusement de l'esprit." [3] Messac had well-grounded reasons for his fears. On the whole, detective fiction has been reserved an uncomely fate. Now that this fiction has experienced an exuberant reception from a whole new shoot of contemporary writers from Butor to Fowles, we express the hope that the field of literary criticism will soon lose its priggishness and awake to the reality that modern literature is conversant with this popular genre and that there are indeed many areas of confluence.

Modern authors, with Henry James and Faulkner and later Borges and Nabokov as precursors, have 'renewed the vigor of the modern novel by touching the earth of popular narrative.' [4] These authors, and others who have followed in their steps like John Hawkes, Thomas Pynchon and Nouveau Roman writers, have taken the classical detective story and its hybrid forms seriously; however critics have not. Sooner or later, critics will have to contend with popular fiction if they wish to keep up with new developments in the novel and the short story. In fact, the trend in contemporary literature towards anti-mimesis and artifice has led writers to appropriate popular forms — not only detective fiction but also fantasy and science fiction .... All of these variations on the 'low' forms are ripe for the "high seriousness" of critical inquiry.[5]

* * *

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

*Dürrenmatt's words on Bach and variations are from an interview: Walter Wager, ed., The Playwrights Speak (New York: Delacorte Press, 1967), pp. 85-86.

[1] Our general definition of the concept of variation is taken from Marc Honegger, ed., Dictionnaire de la musique: Science de la musique: formes, techniques, instruments (Paris: Bordas, 1976), p. 1061.

[2] The complete sentence which contains this phrase reads as follows: "Mais la littérature contemporaine, elle, part du récit policier (de ses personnages, de ses thèmes), c'est-à-dire d'une armature familière, qu'elle transforme." Josée Dupuy, Le Roman policier (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1974), p. 51.

[3] Julian Symons in Mortal Consequences: A History - From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel (New York: Schocken Books, 1972) and Manfred Smuda in "Variation und Innovation: Modelle literarischer Möglichkeiten der Prosa in der Nachfolge Edgar Allan Poes," Poetica, 3, No. 1-2 (1970), 165-187 are two critics who resort to the idea of variation in speaking about the schema and history of the genre and who endorse the view that subsequent detective tales are variations on the original seminal stories of Poe. A critic of Chesterton like W. W. Robson, for example, can claim that " ... it might be said that he derives from a single story of Poe: many of the Father Brown stories can be regarded as ingenious variations on the theme of "The Purloined Letter"," see "Father Brown and Others," G. K. Chesterton: A Centenary Appraisal, John Sullivan, ed. (London: Paul Elek, 1974), p. 60. With re$pect to Poe as the creator of a genial plot like the crime committed in a hermetically sealed room and how every story that has adopted this formula is a variation on "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", probably the best commentary can be found in an intertextual reference in John Dickson Carr's The Three Coffins: "... I am going to outline roughly some of the various means of committing murders in the locked rooms, under separate classifications. This crime belongs under one of them. It's got to. No matter how wide the variation may be, it's only a variation of a few central methods." Dr. Gideon Fell's "The Locked-Room Lecture" appears in The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays, Howard Haycraft, ed. (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1947), p. 277.

[4] André Gide was fascinated by Simenon's prolificity. When questioned about his volume a month, the author of the Maigret stories explained to Gide that each new story was composed in an attempt to write the ideal variation. The great interest Gide took in Simenon's tales can best be appreciated by reading their interesting letters, see "Correspondance André Gide - Georges Simenon," Gérard Cleisz, ed. in Francis

Lacassin and Gilbert Sigaux, *Simenon* (Paris: Plon, 1973), pp. 387-452. As the editor notes, Gide's role in this relationship was that of a teacher: "... Gide lui offre des conseils et des encouragements précis et une critique franche et constructive." p. 390.

[5] Borges' statement about his stories as variations was written in English and published as a 'Foreword' to the translation of Ana Maria Barrenechea's important critical book: *Borges: The Labyrinth Maker,* trans. Robert Lima (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1965), p. viii. The term 'variation' often recurs in Borges' prefaces to indicate the interrelatedness of his stories. Even as a reviewer of detective fiction, Borges often uses the concept of variation to compare different detective stories. Indeed, a whole network of imitations and variations is perceived, in one case, ranging from Poe to Zangwill to Chesterton: "la pieza cerrada.... Edgar Allan Poe lo inventó y propuso una extraña solución .... Más ingeniosa y menos atroz es la variación de Israel Zangwill (*The grey wig*, 1903 ...): dos personas entran a un tiempo en el dormitorio del crimen; uno de ellos anuncia con horror que han degollado al dueño y aprovecha el estupor de su compañero para cometer el asesinato. (El admirable cuento de Chesterton *The wrong shape* no olvida, o redescubre, esa variación)." *Sur*, Nos. 70-75 (1940), 62-63.

[6] Borges' expressions are taken from his 'Prólogo' to *El oro de los tigres* (1972), *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1974), p. 1081.

[7] Bertolt Brecht's idea about variation is cited in François Rivière, "La Fiction policière ou le meurtre du roman," *Europe*, No. 571-572 (1976), 8. Of course, Brecht was an important advocate of the detective genre and wrote several short essays and articles on this topic. One such article was included in Jochen Vogt's excellent compilation of detective story criticism: "Über die Popularität des Kriminalromans," *Der Kriminalroman 11: Zur Theorie und Geschichte einer Gattung* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1971), pp. 315-321.

[8] E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 99. As a sub-literary genre, the detective story is reviewed in critical examinations of paraliterature, for example in Yvon Allard, *Paralittérature 1* (Montréal: Centre de bibliographie de la Centrale des bibliothèques, 1975) and Marc Angenot, *Le Roman populaire: Recherches en paralittérature* (Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1975).

[9] The fact that Dostoevsky enjoyed and utilized popular forms is documented in such studies as Leonid Grossman, *Balzac and Dostoevsky*, trans. Lena Karpov (n.p.: Ardis, 1973) and Michael Holquist, *Dostoevsky and the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977). Dostoevsky's borrowings from detective fiction, as we know, stem from his knowledge of the works of Poe. This influence is mentioned by Mikhail Bakhtine in

La Poétique de Dostoievski, trans. Isabelle Kolitcheff (Paris: Seuil, 1970), p. 194.

[10] Julian Symons, "The Crime Novel: The Face in the Mirror," *Crime in Good Company: Essays on Criminals and Crime-Writing*, ed. Michael Gilbert (London: Constable Publishers, 1959), p. 129.

[11] Few critics investigate the cinematic or literary fortune of popular film genres. However, one well-known comparatist, S. S. Prawer, has recently analyzed fantasy horror films using Robert Wiene's classic as model: *Caligari's Children: The Film as Tale of Terror* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980).

[12] Alfred Appel Jr., *Nabokov's Dark Cinema* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 25-26.

[13] Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 12. Shklovsky's idea of *ostranenie* is the subject of a very good analysis featuring its application in literature and other areas of culture and life: R. H. Stacy, *Defamiliarization in Language and Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1977). Our quotations from Shklovsky will either be from the Lemon and Reis translation or from the Guy Verret translation: *Sur la théorie de la prose* (Lausanne: Editions L'Age d'Homme, 1973).

[14] Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1974), p. 85.

[15] Gérard Genette, "Structuralisme et critique littéraire," *Figures* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 167-168.

[16] Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), p. 36. There are many pertinent references to detective fiction and detective writers throughout this book since Frye considers the detective story within the scope of the romance genre. However, the critic confesses that he is not very well versed in this popular form. This is evident, for instance, in the substantial quotation which we have cited and where Frye erroneously comments on the importance of characterization and social criticism in the detective story. For a more in depth definition of the archetype, consult Frye's basic text: *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957).

[17] Frye, The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance, pp. 44-45. We underline the last sentence of this important quotation.

[18] There are, indeed, many historical surveys written by detective story writers themselves: we may note the seminal studies of Boileau-Narcejac, Le Roman policier (Paris: Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 1964); of Julian Symons, Mortal Consequences: A History - From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel, 1972 and of Francis Lacassin, Mythologie du roman policier, 2 vols. (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1974). Instead of tracing the evolution of the genre in a book-length study, a few authors have produced their own historical assessment by arranging a collection of what they judged to be memorable detective stories. See the anthologies of Dorothy Sayers, ed., Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery and Horror (London: Victor Gollancz, 1928); Donald Yates, ed., Latin Blood: The Best Crime and Detective Stories of South America (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) and we could also note Ellery Queen, ed., Poetic Justice: 23 Stories of Crime, Mystery and Detection by World-Famous Poets from Geoffrey Chaucer to Dylan Thomas (New York: New American Library, 1967).

[19] Laura Prindle Rice-Sayre, "Le Roman policier et le Nouveau Roman: Entretien avec Michel Butor," French-American Review, 1 (1976-1977), 108.

[20] See especially Tzvetan Todorov, "Typologie du roman policier," Poétique de la prose (Paris: Seuil, 1971), pp. 55-65. It was the practice of the formalists like Shklovsky and Tomashevsky to underscore their ideas with examples from popular literature, particularly the detective story. This trend continues today. Roland Barthes in his influential structural essay refers exclusively to Goldfinger to clarify his ideas. Likewise, we note how other structuralists and psychologists as Umberto Eco, I. Revzin and Jacques Lacan wrote essays commenting on Ian Fleming, Agatha Christie and Poe's "The Purloined Letter". Consider for example their following famous articles: Roland Barthes, "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits," Communications, 8 (1966), 1-28; Umberto Eco, "James Bond: Une combinatoire narrative," Communications, 8 (1966), 77-93 and I.I. Revzin, "Notes on the Semiotic Analysis of Detective Novels," New Literary History, 9, No. 2 (1978), 385-388; and Jacques Lacan, "Le Séminaire sur 'La Lettre volée'," Ecrits (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 11-61.

[21] Roland Barthes, S/Z (Paris: Seuil, 1970) and Gérard Genette Figures 111 (Paris: Seuil, 1972).

[22] Roger Caillois in Le Roman Policier, a book written in Buenos Aires in the 1940's,(one cannot help but think of Borges' influence),

was one of the early critics (apart from formalists) to transfer questions of narrative criticism to the detective genre in order to explicate it with more scholarly acumen. This pioneering work elucidated some techniques of detective stories that had been left unmentioned, especially the unique reverse chronology of the genre: *Le Roman policier* (Buenos Aires: Lettres Françaises, 1941). After Caillois and before the 1970's, there were very few literary critics who made a significant contribution to the criticism of the genre. In 1977, Robert Champigny's study on the themes and techniques of detective stories came to complete this lacuna. His book, *What Will Have Happened: A Philosophical and Technical Essay on Mystery Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1977), should be read in conjunction with his theoretical system as expounded in: *Ontology of the Narrative* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972). Another recent critic, Josée Dupuy makes good use of structural theories in a few pages of her short book which is part anthology, part historical survey and part close analysis, see *Le Roman policier*, 1974.

[23] For a general examination of the functioning of the plot in fiction, we may note, in this instance, the recent book by Robert Caserio, *Plot, Story and the Novel: From Dickens and Poe to the Modern Period* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979). It should be underlined that when critics look at techniques in the detective genre, they rarely view them with respect to the context of the pattern or structure of the detective tale. Our thesis attempts to study the plot structure as well as the dominant techniques. To repeat: the plot and the techniques are mutually correlated.

[24] Borges' story "Hombre de la esquina rosada" was published in 1933 and his later story "Episodio del enemigo" (1969) was included in his latest collection of tales *In Praise of Darkness*, trans. Norman Thomas di Giovanni (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974)- A Bilingual Edition, pp. 32-35. In his foreword to his story *The Eye*, Nabokov reveals that the Russian title of his "little novel is *Soglyadatay* .... It is an ancient military term meaning "spy" or "watcher,"." *The Eye* (New York: Phaedra, 1965), p. i. Nabokov's autobiography appeared in 1951 under the title of *Conclusive Evidence*. In his foreword to *Speak, Memory*, the author mentions how this first title implied a detective element: "conclusive evidence of my having existed. Unfortunately, the phrase suggested a mystery story,..." *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), p. 11.

[25] Holquist, "Whodunit and Other Questions: Metaphysical Detective Stories in Post-War Fiction," *New Literary History*, 3, No. 1 (1971), 135-156. Holquist's major thesis aims to prove that the detective story has replaced myths as an inspirational force for contemporary authors: "what the structural and philosophical presuppositions of myth and depth psychology were to Modernism (Mann, Joyce, Woolf, etc.), the detective story is to Post-Modernism (Robbe-Grillet, Borges, Nabokov, etc.)" p. 135. Holquist adds in a footnote that the term "metaphysical detective story" was formulated by Howard Haycraft to describe Chesterton's Father Brown stories. p. 154.

[26] Spanos coins the term "anti-detective" story to designate the literary text which, he believes, employs the detective pattern only as a subject of derision. As he notes: "the paradigmatic archetype of the postmodern literary imagination is the anti-detective story." "The Detective and the Boundary: Some Notes on the Postmodern Literary Imagination," *Boundary 2*, 1, No. 1 (1972), 154. Critics like Spanos argue that modern writers oppose the detective story —they wish to explode the detective story formula in order to create a new fiction. One critic who bases her study on Spanos' definition of the term 'anti-detective' can be seen in Laura Prindle Rice-Sayre, "Abra-Cadaver: The Anti-Detective Story in Post Modern Fiction," *D.A.*, 37 (1977), 4339A.

[27] John Cawelti's few pages on modern literary texts owe their existence to the articles of Holquist and Spanos. His remarks about our authors are in the same vein as his predecessors, in fact, he seems to simply copy them: "Robbe-Grillet, Borges, and Nabokov use the classical detective formula like a distorting fun-house mirror to reflect more sharply the ambiguity, irrationality, and mystery of the world.... Thus they become not only anti- but backward or inverted detective stories, a transcendence or rupturing of the formula." *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976) p. 137. The primary objective of a very recent book by David Grossvogel *Mystery and Its Fiction: From Oedipus to Agatha Christie* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1979) is to define the concept of metaphysical fear and mystery as delineated by such diverse authors as Sophocles, Dostoevsky, Pirandello. It is noteworthy, in view of our topic, that among his authors, he includes E. A. Poe, Agatha Christie, and Borges and Robbe-Grillet. He deduces that Poe's and Christie's tales are the only works that do not contain mystery of a higher level because in their stories the mysteriousness is resolved.

[28] The Nouveau Roman and Robbe-Grillet fare better than our other authors. There are a few critical studies on the detective story and the French school. We note, for example, Jean Alter, "Faulkner, Sartre, and the 'Nouveau Roman'," *Symposium*, 20, No. 2 (1966), 101-112; Hanna Charney, "Pourquoi le 'Nouveau Roman' policier?," *French Review*, 46, No. 1 (1972), 17-23; Ludovic Janvier, *Une Parole exigeante: Le Nouveau roman* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1964); Melvin Friedman, "Les Romans de Samuel Beckett et la tradition du grotesque," *Revue des Lettres Modernes*, 94-99, No. 1 (1964), 31-50. There is also the thesis by E.M. Eisinger, "The Adaptation of Detective Story Techniques in the French New Novel," *D.A.* 34 (1973-1974), 310A-311A. Among Nabokov's critics, there is the significant but sole contribution to the topic made by Alfred Appel Jr. mainly in *Nabokov's Dark Cinema*, 1974. We may also mention Patricia Merivale's pertinent article which makes a comparison between Borges and Nabokov and indicates their parodic use of the detective story — "The Flaunting of Artifice in Vladimir Nabokov and Jorge Luis Borges," *Nabokov: The Man and his Work*, ed. L.S. Dembo (Madison: Univ. of

Wisconsin Press, 1967), pp. 209-224. The overriding influence of the detective genre on Borges has remained unexamined by his critics. In his article "Chesterton en Borges," Anales de literatura Hispanoamericana, 2, No. 3 (1973-1974), 469-494, Anderson Imbert is only interested in the many references Borges has made about this author throughout his writing career and hence how a rapprochement between the two could easily be attempted and would illuminate not only the ficciones of Borges but also the stories of Chesterton. In passing, may we indicate an interesting phenomenon: the few critics who publish articles on this topic, especially on Nabokov, send them to popular journals. For instance, J.R. Christopher, "On Lolita as a Mystery Story," Armchair Detective, 7 (1973), 29; Thomas W. Ross, "Nabokov and Holmes Again: Was the Master Talipedal?," Baker Street Journal, 26 (1976), 37-40; and E.M. Eisinger, "Detective Story Aspects of the Nouveau Roman," Armchair Detective, 12 (1979), 362-365.

[29] Michael Holquist, "Whodunit and Other Questions: Metaphysical Detective Stories in Post-War Fiction," New Literary History, 3, No. 1 (1971), 155.

[30] Alfred Appel, Jr., Vladimir Nabokov: The Annotated Lolita (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), p. 332.

[31] Ludovic Janvier, Une Parole exigeante: Le Nouveau Roman, p. 49.

Chapter One

*Nabokov, *Pale Fire* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), p. 39.

[1] Borges often speaks of his love of popular literature and other art forms. This is observable, for instance, in his English "An Autobiographical Essay" appended to *The Aleph and Other Stories 1933-1969*, ed. and trans. Norman Thomas di Giovanni in collaboration with the author (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968), pp. 203-260. One good example of Borges' use of marginal texts can be seen in his original survey of American literature written in collaboration with Esther Zemborain de Torres: *An Introduction to American Literature*, ed. and trans. L. Clark Keating and Robert O. Evans (New York: Schocken Books, 1973). In the preface to this work, Borges notes how his historical review is different: "... this compendium deals with topics which are not found in more comprehensive volumes, as for instance the detective story, science fiction, tales of the West, and the strange poetry of the American Indian." pp. 3-4.

[2] Borges, in his "Commentaries" to *The Aleph and Other Stories*, informs us about the fate of his two detective tales: "Before "Ibn Hakkan," I had previously tried my hand at two detective stories, "The Garden of Branching Paths" (1941) and "Death and the Compass" (1942). The former won a second prize in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*; the latter was flatly rejected." p. 273. In our forthcoming study of Borges' plot patterns, we begin with these two detective stories and then proceed to other fictions.

[3] The anthologies assembled and edited by Borges and his friend Bioy Casares are entitled respectively *Los mejores cuentos policiales* (1943) and *Los mejores cuentos policiales, segunda serie* (1951).

[4] Richard Burgin, *Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 51. We underline the statement about plots.

[5] See the preface by Jorge Luis Borges included in Manuel Peyrou, *Thunder of the Roses*, trans. Donald Yates (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

[6] The quotation is originally from Donald Yates' Ph. D. thesis "The Argentine Detective Story," Univ. of Michigan, 1960 and cited in Ronald J. Christ, *The Narrow Act: Borges' Art of Allusion* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1969), p. 114.

[7] The passage cited is again from Yates' Ph. D. thesis as quoted in Christ, *The Narrow Act: Borges' Art of Allusion*, p. 119.

[8] For a synopsis of the novel featuring 'Inspector Borges,' see Melvyn Barnes, Best Detective Fiction: A Guide From Godwin to the Present (London: Clive Bingley, 1975), p. 97.

[9] The most engaging conversations on the topic of the detective story are found in Jean de Milleret, Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1967) and María Esther Vázquez, "La novela policial: nacimiento, temas, autores e influencias," Borges: imagenes, memorias, dialogos (Caracas, Venezuela: Monte Avila Editores, 1977), pp. 117-123. This enumeration of his preferred detective writers was taken from Borges "Commentaries" to The Aleph and Other Stories, pp. 273-274.

[10] Borges, "Prólogo a la primera edición," Historia universal de la infamia (1935) in Obras completas, p. 289.

[11] "Entretiens avec James E. Irby," L'Herne (1964) p. 394. In these remarks on Chesterton, Borges brings forward two crucial ideas about his own aesthetics: the co-existence of a visceral or poetic and a rational level and the technique of 'inlaying' where patterns, scenes, or images echo and re-echo each other within the text.

[12] Borges, "Los laberintos policiales y Chesterton," Sur, 10 (1935), 92-94; "Modos de G. K. Chesterton," Sur, 22 (1936), 47-53; "Sobre Chesterton," Otras inquisiciones (1937-1952) (Buenos Aires: Sur, 1952). It is interesting to note that in his first essay on Chesterton, Borges established six main rules for the writing of detective tales.

[13] The first quotation is from "Los laberintos policiales y Chesterton," Sur, 10 (1935), 94 and the other is from "Sobre Chesterton," Otras inquisiciones, Obras completas, p. 694. W. W. Robson, in a very good article, informs us that the "intensely visual" quality of Chesterton's stories is due to the fact that he "began as a painter, and we can find the painter's eye in all his descriptions." "Father Brown and Others," G.K. Chesterton: A Centenary Appraisal, ed. John Sullivan,p. 70. One excellent article by Enrique Anderson Imbert exposes all the references Borges has made to Chesterton in his essays, prefaces and stories. This critical work is a very complete presentation of factual data. Using this information, it would be very valuable if a critic were to proceed to a more in depth comparison of the stories of the two authors in light of the detective story. See "Chesterton en Borges," Anales de literatura Hispano-americana, 2, No. 3 (1973-1974), 469-494.

[14] Borges, "Kafka y sus precursores," Otras inquisiciones, Obras completas, p. 712.

[15] "Sobre Chesterton," Obras completas, p. 695. Borges finds a close resemblance in the portrayal of a threatening world that characterizes the works of Poe, Kafka and Chesterton.

[16] Robert Scholes in Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction veritably takes it for granted that the reader is aware of the influence of the Russian formalists on Nabokov: "(Nabokov, of course, emerged from an intellectual milieu closely allied to formalism. ...)" p. 88. However, to my knowledge, critics of Nabokov have never considered this persuasive effect of the formalist school.

[17] Nabokov, "Interview with Alvin Toffler, 1964," Strong Opinions (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), pp. 42-43.

[18] Appel, Nabokov's Dark Cinema, p. 129.

[19] In his polemical afterword to Lolita, Nabokov compared the predictive nature of both the pornographic and detective novels: "... in modern times the term "pornography" connotes mediocrity, commercialism, and certain strict rules of narration. ... Old rigid rules must be followed by the pornographer in order to have his patient feel the same security of satisfaction as, for example, fans of detective stories feel —." Lolita (New York: Capricorn Books, 1972), p. 315. If proof were necessary that Nabokov relied extensively on popular art forms, one would only have to peruse Appel's comprehensive and brilliant study: Nabokov's Dark Cinema.

[20] Nabokov, Speak, Memory, pp. 289-290.

[21] Nabokov's translation of Through the Looking-Glass was published in Berlin, 1923. He included a series of chess problems in the volume entitled Poems and Problems (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970). Baroness Orczy enjoyed the detective story principally because it had the characteristics and the underlying pattern of a chess game: "Crime interests me only when it resembles a clever game of chess, with many intricate moves which all tend to checkmate the antagonist..." A.E. Murch, The Development of the Detective Novel (New York: Greenwood Press, 1958), p. 210. In fact, both Borges and Nabokov highly prize the writings of Baroness Orczy. It is also interesting to know that a collection of Shklovsky's essays Khod Konya (Knight's Gambit) was printed with a chess-board on its title page, see G.M. Hyde, Vladimir Nabokov: America's Russian Novelist (London: Marion Boyars, 1977), pp. 89-90.

[22] The expression "regular chess attack" is taken from the "Foreword" to The Defense, trans. Michael Scammell in collaboration with the author (New York: Capricorn Books, 1970), p. 8

[23] There are few critical analyses on the importance of the chess game informing Nabokov's novels or other obvious works like Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking-Glass or detective stories like D. Sayers' "Striding Folly" or R. Chandler's The Big Sleep. A recent article like the following one — David I. Sheidlower, "Reading Between the Lines and Squares," Modern Fiction Studies, 25, No. 3 (1979), 413-425 sheds light on this topic. Critics also lag far behind detective writers and other authors in seeing the similarity between the game of chess and the detective story.

[24] Bruce Morrissette in Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet, rev. ed. (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1974) sees resemblances between the "violence sado-érotique" of novels as La Maison de rendez-vous and Projet pour une révolution à New York and novels like those of James Hadley Chase. He lists, for example, the following popular forms in conjunction with the later novel: "images naïves des couvertures de roman, bandes dessinées, livres pornographiques, romans 'durs' où figurent des séquestrées battues comme dans Pas d'orchidées pour Miss Blandish de James Hadley Chase." p. 294.

[25] Morrissette, Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet, p. 117. This critic finds Greene's Brighton Rock very similar to Les Gommes and Le Voyeur. Also, Ludovic Janvier in his study of the Nouveau Roman Une Parole exigeante comments on the points of similarity between Robbe-Grillet's Les Gommes and the novels of Greene, Simenon, and Christie, pp. 43-44.

[26] Laura Prindle Rice-Sayre, "Le Roman policier et le Nouveau Roman: Entretien avec Michel Butor," French-American Review, 1 (1976-1977), 105.

[27] For a discussion about the definite influence of Sartrean philosophy on Robbe-Grillet, see the very good critical text: Betty T. Rahv, From Sartre to the New Novel (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1974).

[28] Robbe-Grillet, "Une voie pour le roman futur (1956)," Pour un nouveau roman (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p.21.

[29] Robbe-Grillet, "Une voie pour le roman futur," Pour un nouveau roman, p. 23.

[30] Robbe-Grillet, "Une voie pour le roman futur," Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 24-25. The word 'vrai' was underlined by the author. We have underlined part of the last sentence for emphasis.

[31] Poe, "The Purloined Letter," *Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Philip Van Doren Stern (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 439. All five of Poe's accepted detective stories - "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" (1842), "The Purloined Letter" (1845), "The Gold-Bug" (1843) and "Thou Art the Man" (1844) are very original. Each has had a unique and lasting influence on ensuing tales of the genre. They exhibit Poe's genius in plot construction and arrangement of narrative viewpoint.

[32] John Le Carré, *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963), p. 19.

[33] Manuel Peyrou, *Thunder of the Roses*, trans. Donald Yates, pp. 12-16. The critic (and murderer) of the essay entitled "Hamlet and the Detective Story" argues a strong case to prove that the writings of authors as Chekhov and Balzac are detective in nature. For instance, with respect to Hawthorne, the hero writes: "In Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* there is also to be found a narrative (the tale of Dominicus Pike) which cries out for baptism as a detective story." p. 13.

[34] Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 139.

[35] The first intertextual reference to Poe is from Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Resident Patient" in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 159; the second reference is from G. K. Chesterton, "The Blue Cross" in *The Innocence of Father Brown* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 11; and the third allusion is found in E. C. Bentley, *Trent's Last Case* (New York: Perennial Library, 1978), p. 37.

[36] Butor's excellent use of 'intertextualité' in *L'Emploi du temps* demonstrates how he, and other Nouveau Roman writers, have a leading preoccupation with techniques of detective fiction. Robbe-Grillet does include references to the 'roman policier' in a later novel like *Projet pour une révolution à New York*. The crucial roles of the intertextual allusion in this novel are summarized by Morrissette: "La couverture du roman policier, par exemple, est à la fois une duplication intérieure de l'intrigue du roman, un point de départ pour la matérialisation de plusieurs scènes, une scène en trompe-l'oeil pour le serrurier, un moyen de passer d'un 'narrateur' à un autre, et un procédé de reprise de scènes déjà commencées ou d'annonce de scènes à venir." *Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet*, p. 291. However, in Robbe-Grillet's later works, the rehandling of pornographic content predominates over the transformation of detective elements. In his earlier novels, one could think of the Oedipus leitmotif in *Les Gommes* or the film billboard announcing a thriller in *Le Voyeur* as inner duplications using detective elements.

[37] Borges and Nabokov are very similar in their meta-fictions which situate a critic or narrator-commentator of fictional works as

the sole subject of a short story or novel. We may think, for instance, of the comparison that could be established between a book review like "El acercamiento a Almotásim" or a commentary like "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" and the biographer's task in The Real Life of Sebastian Knight or Kinbote's notes in the extreme meta-fictional novel Pale Fire which is essentially an extension of this same critical technique.

[38] Borges, "La muerte y la brújula," Obras completas, p. 499.

[39] In a book review on detective fiction, Borges drew a relation between Dupin, the master reasoner, and subsequent thinkers as Holmes and Teste: "la decente impersonalidad voluntaria de C. Auguste Dupin; antepasado ilustre de Holmes y hasta de Monsieur Teste." Sur, Nos. 70-75 (1940), 61. See also Borges' essay "Valéry como símbolo," Obras completas, pp. 686-687.

[40] Borges, "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote," Obras completas, p. 447.

[41] Borges, "Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto," Obras completas, p. 600. The phrase — "the very simplicity of the thing" is taken from "The Purloined Letter," Edgar Allan Poe, ed. Philip Van Doren Stern, p. 440. We should note that the differentiation between an "obscure" and an "inexplicable" problem is made by Borges in his essay "Sobre Chesterton" where, in a footnote, he contrasts Chesterton with other detective writers: "No la explicación de lo inexplicable sino de lo confuso es la tarea que se imponen, por lo común, los novelistas policiales." Obras completas, p. 696.

[42] Borges, "El acercamiento a Almotásim," Obras completas, p. 414. "El acercamiento a Almotásim" is one of Borges' earliest stories which was in fact published in his Historia de la eternidad (1936). Borges has avowed that, in retrospect, he can regard this essay-fiction as important in his development as a writer: "it now seems to me to foreshadow and even to set the pattern for those tales that were somehow awaiting me, and upon which my reputation as a storyteller was to be based." "An Autobiographical Essay," The Aleph and Other Stories, p. 240. Ronald Christ in The Narrow Act examines this story at length. Although Borges, in the story, refers to Chesterton's influence and then refutes it, Christ maintains that Chesterton should not be dismissed, see pp. 94-130. As expected, Borges incorporated, in one of his later stories, an homage to Chesterton. The first sentence of "Tema del traidor y del héroe" are words of praise for the artful contrived mysteries of Chesterton: "Bajo el notorio influjo de Chesterton (discurridor y exornador de elegantes mistérios) ..." Obras completas, p. 496.

[43] Borges, "El acercamiento a Almotásim," Obras completas, p. 416.

[44] Borges, "Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain," *Obras completas*, p. 462.

[45] John Fowles in an "Afterword" to an edition of Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (London: Pan Books, 1975) explains how the expected resolution is often an unconvincing set-piece — and a setback: "However fantastic and far-reaching the first half of a detective 'mystery,' the second half is bound to drop (and only too often, flop) towards a neat and plausible everyday solution." p. 203.

[46] Borges, "Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto," *Obras completas*, pp. 604-605.

[47] Poe, "The Purloined Letter," *Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Philip Van Doren Stern, p. 453.

[48] Georges Charbonnier, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), see pp. 20-21 and pp. 132-133.

[49] Nabokov, *Pale Fire*, p. 57.

[50] Nabokov, *Pnin*. (New York: Avon Books, 1969), p. 188.

[51] Nabokov, *Pale Fire*, p. 23.

[52] Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (New York: New Directions, 1941), p. 153.

[53] Nabokov, *Despair* (New York: Capricorn Books and G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), p. 154. In *Lolita*, references to Sherlock Holmes are infrequent, on the other hand, important allusions are made to other detective writers as Poe and detective heroes — a copy of Agatha Christie's *A Murder is Announced* is in the prison library (p. 33) and Quilty, in his "cryptogrammic paper chase" slyly refers to the 'gentleman-cambrioleur' (p. 252). Also, the recently published Edmund Wilson-Vladimir Nabokov correspondence offers further proof of Nabokov's intimate knowledge of Sherlock Holmes: some of his letters parody Holmes' method, others reveal his familiarity — "Incidentally, I was wrong in saying that there were no Russians in "Sherlock." Except for two or three stories from the "Case Book" I had read them all, ..." *The Nabokov-Wilson Letters: Correspondence 1940-1971*, ed. Simon Karlinsky (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 162.

[54] Nabokov, *The Defense*, pp. 33-34.

[55] Nabokov, *The Defense*, p. 166.

[56] Nabokov, *The Defense*, pp. 200-201.

[57] Nabokov, *Despair*, pp. 131-132.

[58] Nabokov, *Despair*, p. 98.

[59] Nabokov, *Despair*, p. 199. We underline the word *Rascal*....

[60] Nabokov, *Despair*, p. 132.

[61] Nabokov, *Despair*, pp. 33-34.

[62] Nabokov, *Lolita*, pp. 212-213.

[63] Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, p. 92. There are several good reasons for thinking Sebastian is parodying a novel like Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*: 1) the setting in a sealed compartment, 2) the relation and guilt of all the suspects, 3) the detective's foreign accent and his many disguises, 4) the imitation of style ...

[64] Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, p. 96.

[65] Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, p. 94.

[66] Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, p. 91.

[67] Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, p. 91.

[68] Page Stegner in *Escape into Aesthetics: The Art of Vladimir Nabokov* (New York: Apollo Editions / William Morrow and Company, 1966) examines with a Nabokovian lightness and ease the dominance of parody in all of the author's novels. After many enumerations of the different types of literary forms parodied, the critic concludes with the following remark that reinforces our own allegation: "Of the novels published in English, *Laughter in the Dark*, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, *Pnin*, *Lolita*, and *Pale Fire* are in part parodies of traditional literary forms or formulas. Parody, in fact, is so prevalent in Nabokov's fiction that it becomes almost a convention of his composition," p. 29.

[69] Nabokov, *Pnin*, p. 136.

[70] The expression "Parody, that last resort of wit" resounds like Nabokov's own cri de coeur. It was found tucked away in an obscure footnote in the Pale Fire commentary. The entire verses deserve to be cited: (notice how parody is again defined in terms of opposition echoing the detective structure and the game of chess):

I have a certain liking, I admit,
For Parody, that last resort of wit:
"In nature's strife when fortitude prevails
The victim falters and the victor fails." p. 190.

Nabokov explicitly contrasts his own 'lighthearted' use of parody with the traditional definition while referring to his short story The Gift. "When the poet Cincinnatus C., in my dreamiest and most poetical novel, accuses (not quite fairly) his mother of being a parody, he uses the word in its familiar sense of "grotesque imitation."When Fyodor, in The Gift, alludes to that 'spirit of parody' which plays iridescently around the spray of genuine 'serious' poetry, he is referring to parody in the sense of an essentially lighthearted, delicate, mockingbird game." These words along with the author's assertion that "Satire is a lesson, parody is a game" were revealed in an interview: "Interview with Alfred Appel, Jr., 1966," Strong Opinions, p. 76 and p. 75.

[71] Borges, "Magias parciales del Quijote," Obras completas, p. 667.

[72] The first quotation is from Borges' "Prólogo," El informe de Brodie (1970), Obras completas, p. 1021; Nabokov, Speak, Memory, pp. 124-125 and Nabokov as cited in "Editor's Introduction," Page Stegner,ed., The Portable Nabokov (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. xxii-xxiii; Robbe-Grillet, "Sur quelques notions périmées," and "Temps et description dans le récit d'aujourd'hui," in Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 46-47, and p. 166.

[73] Borges, "Prólogo," La Invención de Morel in Prólogos, ed. Torres Agüero (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de los Buenos Ayres, 1975), pp. 22-23. We underlined the words that state outrightly the author's view. Borges completely disagreed with José Ortega y Gasset who in La deshumanización del arte, (1925) had advocated the psychological novel and had disputed the fact that new plots surely could not be invented in our modern age.

[74] Borges, "Prólogo," La Invención de Morel in Prólogos, ed. Torres Agüero, p. 23.

[75] Borges, "El arte narrativo y la magia," Discusión (1932) Obras completas, p. 231.

[76] Borges, "El arte narrativo y la magia," Obras completas, p. 232. Borges' idea of "magic causality," although formulated in

1932, has interested present scholars of fantastic literature. This concept is analyzed by Emir Rodriguez Monegal in his article: "Borges: Una teoría de la literatura fantástica," Revista Iberoamericana, 42 (1976), 177-189, and in his book Jorge Luis Borges: A Literary Biography (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978), especially pp. 347-440.

[77] The "Prólogo" to El informe de Brodie is one case in point where Borges explicitly reveals the similarity of his plots. See Obras completas, p. 1022.

[78] This phrase comes from Borges' very incisive "Prólogo a la primera edición" to his early narratives that comprise the Historia universal de la infamia (1935). At this time, Borges adds that the visual technique which exposes only the most fundamental scenes of a man's life was used in one of his very influential stories: "(Ese propósito visual rige también el cuento "Hombre de la Esquina Rosada.") No son, no tratan de ser, psicológicos." Obras completas, p. 289. In one of his essays in Otras inquisiciones (1952) entitled "El primer Wells," Borges notes how it is not only the intricate plot but also the ability to depict symbolic scenes that is an aesthetic prerequisite for a better plot: "las mejores novelas policiales no son las de mejor argumento. ... En mi opinión, la precedencia de la primeras novelas de Wells — The Island of Dr. Moreau, verbigracia, o The Invisible Man — se debe a una razón más profunda. No sólo es ingenioso lo que refieren; es también simbólico de procesos que de algún modo son inherentes a todos los destinos humanos." Obras completas, pp. 697-698.

[79] Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," Obras completas, p. 436.

[80] Nabokov, Laughter in the Dark (New York: New Directions, 1938), p. 183.

[81] Poe's ideas about the art of composing the short story and especially the detective tale will be examined in our following chapter.

[82] The term "contrapuntal pyrotechnics" is from Kinbote's "Commentary" in Pale Fire, p. 180.

[83] Nabokov, Pale Fire, p. 56.

[84] Nabokov's phrase occurs in his collection of interviews and rebuttals, Strong Opinions, p. 99.

[85] Nabokov, Pale Fire, p. 44. We underline the important words "web of sense" and "pattern in the game."

[86] Nabokov called his 'ideal reader' a "little Nabokov." See Andrew Field, Nabokov: His Life in Art (Toronto: Little Brown, 1967), p. 315.

[87] Katherine K. Passias, "New Novel, New New Novel: An Interview with A. Robbe-Grillet," Substance, 13 (1976), 130.

[88] Robert Kellogg and Robert Scholes, The Nature of Narrative (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 212.

[89] Robbe-Grillet, "Sur quelques notions périmées," Pour un nouveau roman, p. 38.

[90] Vicki Mistacco, "Order and Disorder in Film and Fiction: An Interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet," Critical Inquiry, 4 (1977), 5-6. We concluded that in this text 'redundancy was the message.' Robbe-Grillet's actual words are "Redundancy is therefore necessary for the message." p. 15. This interview was translated by Bruce Morrissette and was given by the French author when he visited New York as a visiting professor. In our opinion, this interview presents the clearest expression of Robbe-Grillet's aesthetics and his basic intentions. We have underlined a few words in the quotation for special attention.

[91] Borges is predominately known for his stories published in the 1940's: Ficciones (1944) and El Aleph (1949). The first major translation of a collection of stories was undertaken by Néstor Ibarra and Paul Verdevoye, Fictions (Paris: Gallimard, 1951). Roger Caillois published his translations of four stories from El Aleph in a volume entitled Labyrinthes (Paris: Gallimard, 1953).

[92] Anthony Kerrigan and collaborators translated a few of Borges' tales: Ficciones (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1962). Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby chose representative stories, parables and essays for their anthology: Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings (New York: New Directions, 1962).

[93] Borges, "An Autobiographical Essay," The Aleph and Other Stories, p. 254.

[94] The apposite expression 'literature of exhaustion' was proposed by John Barth in his important essay "The Literature of Exhaustion." The Atlantic, Aug., 1967, pp. 29-34. The critic John Stark used this phrase as the title of a book on Borges, Nabokov and John Barth. Although the title of the critical study is perceptive, the content of this book is not helpful in any way : The Literature of Exhaustion:

(Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1974).

[95] All aspects of Borges' writing — his themes, techniques, images (especially the labyrinth), detective story elements, fantastic elements — have had an indelible influence on the younger generation of Latin American writers. The extent of this influence has as yet not been carefully gauged, but for a short view of the topic, see such surveys as: D.P.Gallagher, Modern Latin American Literature (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973).

[96] Nabokov, in a preface to the 1965 edition of Despair, delineates the adventure of his original manuscript Otchayanie: the Russian novel was first written in 1932, serialized in an émigré magazine in 1934, published in book-form in Berlin in 1936, and then finally translated by the author into English in 1937 (London: John Long Limited). The edition which appeared in English in 1965 was a revised one: "I have done more than revamp my thirty-year-old translation: I have revised Otchayanie itself." Despair, p. 8.

[97] Sartre, "Vladimir Nabokov: 'La Méprise'," Situations,I (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p. 54.

[98] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Préface," to Nathalie Sarraute's Portrait d'un inconnu (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), pp. 7-8.

[99] Appel, in his interview with Nabokov, brings up the topic of the detective story as it is found in Nabokov's works and notes that the early French translation of Despair influenced writers, namely those of the Nouveau Roman school. He further questions Nabokov on his frequent use of the detective elements: "Someone [Ludovic Janvier] has called the New Novel "the detective story taken seriously" (there it is again, the influence of the French edition of Despair). Parodistic or not, you take it "seriously," given the number of times you've transmuted the properties of the genre. Would you say something about why you've returned to them so often?" to which Nabokov retorts: "My boyhood passion for the Sherlock Holmes and Father Brown stories may yield some twisted clue." "An Interview with Vladimir Nabokov," Strong Opinions, p. 174.

[100] This conjecture that Borges may have read Despair cannot be supported by documentation. Nevertheless, we believe that this supposition can be entertained. In an interview between Appel and Nabokov, the critic informs us (and also Nabokov) that Borges does know about Nabokov's works since he was scheduled to contribute an article to a special issue of L'Arc devoted to Nabokov, see "An Interview with Vladimir Nabokov," Nabokov: The Man and His Work, ed. L. S. Dembo (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p. 34.

[101] Nabokov revealed to Appel (during their interesting interview) that he had read his first Borges story only a few years before 1966 and that he was not aware of his works before then, Strong Opinions, p. 80. Although Nabokov has always praised Robbe-Grillet's writings, he holds a very 'strong opinion' against the Nouveau Roman group itself: "there does exist one great French writer, Robbe-Grillet; his work is grotesquely imitated by a number of banal scribblers..." Strong Opinions, p. 4. Also, Nabokov's respect for Borges is documented in another way: the anagram 'Osberg' in Ada refers to Borges, Ada (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 488.

[102] The first quotation is from the Appel interview and the second from the Toffler interview, Strong Opinions, p. 80 and p. 44.

[103] David Hayman, "An Interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet," Contemporary Literature, 16, No. 3 (1975), 276. Robbe-Grillet mistakenly states that the French translation of Despair appeared in 1933. In point of fact, it was based on Nabokov's English translation and published in 1939.

[104] See, amongst others, George Bluestone, Novels into Film (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1966).

[105] See the valuable book: Claude-Edmonde Magny, L'Age du roman américain (Paris: Seuil, 1948).

[106] Hugo Santiago, "Introducción," to Jorge Luis Borges, Adolfo Bioy Casares and Hugo Santiago, Les Autres (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1974) as cited in Edgardo Cozarinsky, Borges y el cine (Buenos Aires: Sur, 1974), p.133.

[107] A collection of Borges' reviews on detective fiction would be highly profitable in view of the author's many critical essays, interviews and discussions on this popular genre.

[108] Just as Borges uses Chesterton's Father Brown stories as a touchstone from which to assess detective fiction, the gangster films of Sternberg contain precisely what he looks for in films (and in literature). For instance, in his three early related essays in Discusión: "La postulación de la realidad," "Films" and "El arte narrativo y la magia," Sternberg's films recur as examples of the use of magical causality and the depiction of irreality in the film medium. Borges owes in part the visual technique of choosing only important moments to his films. In "La postulación de la realidad," Borges speaks about this technique employed to create magical causality: "... las novelas cinematográficas de Josef von Sternberg, hechas también de significativos mementos. Es método admirable y difícil ... Este suele funcionar a pura síntaxis, a pura destreza verbal." Obras completas, p. 221. And in an interview with Charbonnier, Borges expresses his debt to Sternberg's films: "'Hombre de la esquina rosada', que j'ai écrit volontairement comme une série d'images. En ce temps-là j'admirais beaucoup un metteur en scène qu'on a trop oublié,

Josef von Sternberg." *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, p. 129. In his formative years, Borges considered von Sternberg only second to Chesterton.

[109] The original expression reads "immóviles pesadillas" and refers to the paintings of De Chirico which Borges, interestingly enough, associates with the hallucinatory irreality of films like Sternberg's or Chaplin's. "Films," *Obras completas*, p. 222.

[110] Appel in *Nabokov's Dark Cinema* comments on Sellers' brilliant performance as Quilty. In fact, as the critic insinuates, Peter Sellers could have perfectly played both roles: "Willfully charming, sinister, and hysterical, a creature who gets what he wants by means of rhetoric, his Quilty *is* Nabokov's prose, and Sellers might well have played Humbert, too. "Wonderful idea!" agrees Nabokov." p. 240.

[111] Nabokov, *Despair*, p. 222.

[112] Cozarinsky, *Borges y el cine*, p. 91.

[113] André Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet* (Paris: Seghers, 1972), p. 46.

[114] Note the title of Gérard Genette's article "Vertige fixé" appended to *Dans le labyrinthe* (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1964) (Collection 10/18), pp. 273-306. In this article, Genette moves undifferentiatingly between films and novels of the French author. Mention is even made of Borges and his "secrètes aventures de l'ordre." p. 304.

[115] Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 70-71. We underline the important idea of omission or *ruptures*.

[116] These are, as mentioned, expressions formulated by W.V. Spanos ("anti-detective story") and Michael Holquist ("metaphysical detective story").

[117] Hubert Aquin, *Prochain épisode* (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1965), pp. 7-8. We have underlined one sentence for special consideration.

Chapter Two

[*] E. A. Poe, "Letter to Philip P. Cooke, 9 Aug., 1846," The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. John Ward Ostrom, Vol. II (New York: Gordian Press, 1966), p. 328.

[1] Borges, "Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain," Obras completas, p. 462.

[2] Nabokov, The Defense, pp. 33-34, p. 34. In the quotation, allusion is made to the hero's love of two authors — the second is Jules Verne.

[3] Robbe-Grillet's "prière d'insérer" to Les Gommes is cited in Bruce Morrissette, Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet, p. 41.

[4] Jacques Laurent, Roman du roman (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), p. 166.

[5] Marjorie Nicolson, "The Professor and the Detective (1929)," The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Howard Haycraft, pp. 117-118.

[6] Frye, The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance, p. 36.

[7] Gérard Genot in "L'Ecriture libératrice," Communications, 11 (1968) uses the word 'archétype' in a manner analogous to our own definition of the prototext: "on voit quel rôle les notions de genre et de modèle peuvent avoir dans cette conception [de rendre le texte le plus perceptible possible] celles d'archétypes, de modèles partiellement abstractisés qui servent de guide au lecteur." p. 49. See also Donna Bennett's recent article "The Detective Story: Towards a Definition of Genre," PTL, 4 (1979) where reference is made to a "mental construct, a kind of 'supertext'" in her explanation of the genre, p. 235.

[8] Aristotle, On Poetry and Style, trans. G.M.A. Grube (New York: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1958), p. 17.

[9] María Esther Vázquez, Borges: Imagenes, memorias, dialogos, p. 123. Borges emphatically concludes his discussion by re-affirming the value of the classical form of the detective story which thus assures its place in the world of letters: "Y en la historia de la literatura la misión de la novela policial puede ser recordar estas virtudes clásicas de la organización y premeditación de todas las obras literarias." As we know, Vazquez has written some detective stories. She is also a close friend of Borges and has worked jointly with him on literary projects and anthologies.

[10] Borges, "Commentaries," *The Aleph and Other Stories*, p. 274.

[11] Dorothy Sayers, "*The Five Red Herrings*," *The New Sayers Omnibus* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1956), p. 209.

[12] The quotation is from Poe's review of "Hawthornes's 'Tales'," *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, eds. Edmund Clarence Stedman and Edward Woodberry, Vol. VII (New York: The Colonial Company, 1895), p. 31. For the "Philosophy of Composition," see *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. J. Harrison, Vol. XIV (New York: Society of English and French Lit., 1902), p. 193.

[13] Dürrenmatt, *Das Versprechen*: *Requiem auf den Kriminalroman* (Zürich: Arche, 1958), pp. 18-19.

[14] The most famous comparison between Greek tragedy and detective fiction was written by W.H. Auden in his article "The Guilty Vicarage," *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1956), 146-158. André Malraux also pronounced the now often quoted phrase which ends his "Préface à *Sanctuaire*": "*Sanctuaire*, c'est l'intrusion de la tragédie grecque dans le roman policier." *Nouvelle Revue Française*, 41, No. 242 (1933), 747.

[15] See Jean de Milleret, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, p. 205.

[16] B. Eikhenbaum, "Sur la théorie de la prose," *Théorie de la littérature*, trans. Tzvetan Todorov (Paris: Seuil, 1965), p. 203.

[17] Aristotle, *On Poetry and Style*, p. 14.

[18] Chesterton, "On Detective Novels," *Generally Speaking*: *A Book of Essays* (London: Methuen and Co., 1928), p. 5.

[19] David I. Grossvogel, *Mystery and Its Fictions*: *From Oedipus to Agatha Christie*, p. 95. The expression "a matter of time" is found on p. 98.

[20] The word "trickster" used to signify the enigma-maker is taken from Robert Champigny, *What Will Have Happened*: *A Philosophical and Technical Essay on Mystery Stories*, p. 45. As Champigny explains: "the murderer is a trickster: inside the fiction, he is the character mainly responsible for the riddle and the treacherous clues."

[21] E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel, p. 75.

[22] Chesterton, "On Detective Novels," Generally Speaking: A Book of Essays, p. 5.

[23] Roger Caillois, Le Roman policier, p.48.

[24] Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder: An Essay," The Simple Art of Murder (New York: Ballantine Books, 1934), p. 14. For additional information concerning the aesthetic and philosophical dimension of the role of puppets, we refer you to: Roger-Daniel Bensky, Recherches sur les structures et la symbolique de la marionnette (Paris: Nizet, 1971).

[25] Laura Prindle Rice-Sayre, "Le Roman policier et le Nouveau Roman: Entretien avec Michel Butor," French-American Review, 1 (1976-1977), 113.

[26] Melvyn Barnes, Best Detective Fiction: A Guide from Godwin to the Present, p. 24.

[27] For an analysis of this concept of power not as a property but as a strategy, see Michel Foucault, Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

[28] Poe, "The Purloined Letter," Edgar Allan Poe, p. 451.

[29] For the clear distinction made between the external and the internal double see Lanin A. Gyurko, "Borges and the Theme of the Double," Ibero-Amerikanisches Archiv, 2, No. 3 (1976), 194.

[30] Borges, "Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto," Obras completas, p. 606.

[31] Tzvetan Todorov, "Typologie du roman policier," Poétique de la prose, p. 62.

[32] The quotation is found in the editor's introduction. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, trans. and ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1976), p. xii. For an interesting study limited to the detective and his actual reading of texts see Marie-Hélène Huet, "Enquête et représentation dans le roman policier," Europe, No. 571-572 (1976), 99-104.

[33] G.K. Chesterton, "The Blue Cross," *The Innocence of Father Brown*, p. 12.

[34] Todorov, "Typologie du roman policier," *Poétique de la prose*, p. 57.

[35] Todorov, "Typologie du roman policier," *Poétique de la prose*, p. 59.

[36] The expression is taken from the title of Champigny's book *What Will Have Happened: A Philosophical and Technical Essay on Mystery Stories*.

[37] For a good example of how Shklovsky uses his terms of *fabula* and *sjužet* in an analysis of a text containing detective elements, we refer you to his article: "The Mystery Novel: Dickens' *Little Dorrit*," *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, eds. L. Matejka and K. Pomorska (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 220-226; or to the more complete text found in the French edition: "Le Roman à mystères," *Sur la théorie de la prose*, trans. Guy Verret, pp. 169-209.

[38] Todorov, "Typologie du roman policier," *Poétique de la prose*, p. 58.

[39] Todorov, "Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme," *Poétique 2* (Paris: Seuil, 1968), p. 52.

[40] Shlomith Rimmon, "A Comprehensive Theory of Narrative: Genette's *Figures III* and the Structuralist Study of Fiction," *PTL*, 1 (1976), 35. The 'fine distinctions' brought to the concepts by the individual structuralists is reviewed by the same critic in her book: *The Concept of Ambiguity — the Example of James* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 29-36.

[41] Michael Holquist, *Dostoevsky and the Novel*, p. 78.

[42] One of the first and still very pertinent studies on time in the detective story is Roger Caillois' *Le Roman policier*, p. 11. His entire definition of the reverse time particular to detective fiction should be noted: "Il [le roman policier] prend le temps à rebours et renverse la chronologie. Son point de départ n'est autre que le point d'arrivée du roman d'aventures: le meurtre qui met fin à quelque drame qu'on va reconstituer au lieu qu'on l'ait exposé d'abord. Dans le roman policier en effet, *le récit suit l'ordre de la découverte*."

[43] Michel Butor, L'Emploi du temps (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1957), p. 251.

[44] Jean Pouillon, "Les Règles du je," Les Temps modernes, 12, No. 134 (1957), 1595. Concerning the reverse chronology of the 'detective' novel L'Emploi du temps, Pouillon explains precisely how time functions in detective fiction generally: "Le problème habituel de l'expression du temps est renversé: ce n'est plus l'avenir qui est incertain, c'est le passé et il s'agit non plus de le retrouver dans ce qui fut sa liberté ou son équivoque, mais de le reconstituer dans l'exacte détermination qui le lie au présent du narrateur, de reconstituer 'l'emploi du temps'." p. 1595.

[45] Agatha Christie, Curtain: Poirot's Last Case (London: William Collins and Sons, 1975), p. 46.

[46] The term "temporary gap" was formulated by Meir Sternberg, in Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978).

[47] Reference is never made to the unreliable narrator in detective stories. The only mention of a detective novel pertains to the idea of moral distance between the character Pinkie and the reader in Graham Greene's Brighton Rock. See Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961).

[48] The concept of the unreliable narrator was used by one critic to study novels which possess elements of mystery: Jacqueline Viswanathan, "The Innocent Bystander: The Narrator's Position in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," James's "The Turn of the Screw," and Butor's L'Emploi du temps," Hebrew Univ. Studies in Literature, 4, No. 1 (1976), 27-47. In a section on "viewpoint," Robert Champigny in What Will Have Happened examines the intrusion of the author and his "free comments" and how these affect the interpretation of the narrative by the reader. Donna Bennett in her article "The Detective Story: Towards a Definition of Genre," PTL, 4 (1979), 233-266 establishes her analysis on Dorothy Sayers' four categories of the detective's range or degree of confidentiality.

[49] Gérard Genette, Figures III, p. 203.

[50] Jean Pouillon, Temps et roman (Paris: Gallimard, 1946); Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," PMLA, 70, No. 5 (1955), 1160-1184; and Franz K. Stanzel, Typische Formen des Romans (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1964).

[51] Roland Bourneuf and Réal Ouellet, L'Univers du roman (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), pp. 91-92. Recently, Culler has been using the terms fabula and sjužet in his own criticism.

[52] Viktor Shklovsky in "The Mystery Novel: Dickens' Little Dorrit," Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views, eds. L. Matejka and K. Pomorska, brings together the riddle and the mystery story and shows how the structure which contains a misleading solution is similar in both.

[53] Josée Dupuy insists on this idea of the extension of time or "la durée": "Le récit policier maintient la curiosité du lecteur en différant l'explication, toujours promise, toujours repoussée, c'est-à-dire en jouant avec la durée." Le Roman policier, p. 103.

[54] "Permanent gaps," according to Shlomith Rimmon in The Concept of Ambiguity - the Example of James, are gaps that can never be filled in the narrative and consequently consign the text to complete ambiguity. A story like Henry James' The Turn of the Screw is an excellent example of this "permanent gap." The detective story, in contrast, does arrive at a resolution, hence the text has a primary informational gap and secondary gaps. These gaps are responsible for the difference between a text that remains ambiguous and one that is satisfactorily explained.

[55] Although Bruce Morrissette, for example, is aware of the technique of omission in detective fiction, he would not wish to concede that Robbe-Grillet's poetics of "the hole" holds any relation with that of the detective genre. See especially Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet, pp. 77-110.

[56] We do not know of any critic of the detective genre who has studied this device of creating, compounding and dissolving omissions which is so central to the detective story.

[57] Gérard Genette, Figures 111, p. 212.

[58] Robert Champigny in What Will Have Happened appears impatient with the term 'detective story' and wishes to replace it with the other term 'hermeneutic tale.'

[59] Roland Barthes, S/Z (Paris: Seuil, 1970), p. 24. Another critic, Todorov, has studied the procedures used by Henry James to establish an enigmatic text, see "Le Secret du récit," and "Les Fantômes de Henry James," in Poétique de la prose, pp. 151-185 and pp. 186-196.

[60] Laurent Jenny, "La Stratégie de la forme," *Poétique*, 27 (1976), 260. Jenny's thought is compressed into this noteworthy aphorism.

[61] Julia Kristeva, *Semiotikè: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p. 146. We underline the important terms 'absorption' and 'transformation.'

[62] The expression 'narcissistic text' is used by Linda Hutcheon in her article "Modes et formes du narcissisme littéraire," *Poétique*, 29 (1977), 90-106. Analogous terms which could be employed to denote this inward-looking narrative are 'self-reflective' or 'autocentric' texts.

[63] The precise thesis of Robert Alter's critical book on Borges and Nabokov and other authors as Fielding is that the self-conscious novels tend towards the reproduction of narrative operations "en abyme." See *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975).

[64] Michel Butor in "La Critique et l'invention" instructs us that a novel may be constituted by means of not only a single but of multiple inner duplications: "à l'intérieur de l'oeuvre s'instaure non point *une* oeuvre d'art imaginaire, mais tout un système de réfractions. La mise en abîme simple (roman pour ainsi dire du seul roman) n'en est que le premier degré." *Répertoire 111* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1968), p. 18.

[65] The fantastic tale, like the detective story, mainly restricts its system of cross-references to include only other stories of the same genre. This characteristic of *intertextualité* in the fantastic tale has been pointed out by Jean Bellemin-Noël, "Notes sur le fantastique (textes de Théophile Gautier)," *Littérature*, No. 8 (1972), 3-23.

[66] John Dickson Carr, "The Locked-Room Lecture" from *The Three Coffins* as cited in *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Howard Haycraft, pp. 273-274 and Carr's *The Burning Court* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937), pp. 238-239.

[67] Agatha Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1954), p. 73.

[68] Agatha Christie, *The ABC Murders* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1963), p. 54. The intrusion of a detective writer in a detective story is so recurrent that it has almost become a tradition of the genre. Linda Hutcheon notes how a reader comes to expect the presence of this character:

"cette forme littéraire est en elle-même une forme très autocentrique: en fait, le lecteur en vient à anticiper la présence d'un écrivain détective à l'intérieur de l'histoire même, que ce soit dans un Agatha Christie (par exemple *The Pale Horse*) ou un Dorothy Sayers (Harriet Vane)." "Modes et formes du narcissisme littéraire," *Poétique*, 29 (1977), 103.

[69] When Gide coined the phrase 'en abyme,'(*Journal*, 1893) he was thinking of the mirrors in the paintings of Memling and Quentin Metzys: "dans tels tableaux ... un petit miroir convexe et sombre reflète, à son tour, l'intérieur de la scène où se joue la scène peinte." Gide's famous definition may be found in Bruce Morrissette, "Un Héritage d'André Gide: La Duplication intérieure," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 8, No. 2 (1971), 127. Paintings and art objects are very prominent as inner duplications in the Nouveau Roman. The most useful examinations are those of Morrissette, Ricardou and Dällenbach. See Ricardou's "Le Récit abymé," *Le Nouveau roman* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), pp. 47-75 and Dällenbach's *Le Récit spéculaire: Essai sur la mise en abyme* (Paris: Seuil, 1977). The only critic to mention this technique in detective fiction is Dällenbach. However, he disposes of the topic in a few footnotes or cursory remarks because he strongly believes that detective fiction, like fantastic literature (which also makes widespread use of self-reflection), does not merit any attention. It is very ironic that this critic who is always writing on 'le roman policier' as an inner duplication in Butor's *L'Emploi du temps* should find it so discomforting to study 'le roman policier' and its own very prodigious use of *mise en abyme*. For his investigation of the detective story as a template in Butor's work, see his excellent little book: *Le Livre et ses miroirs dans l'oeuvre romanesque de Michel Butor* (Paris: Minard, 1972). To illustrate how this critic recognizes that the detective story uses the technique of *mise en abyme* and yet is prevented from analyzing it because of his attitude towards popular literature, let us note one of his milder comments: "Qu'elle [la mise en abyme] y réussisse jusqu'à l'exaspération, il n'est pour s'en convaincre que de se rapporter au *Zauberschloss* de Tieck ou aux *Dix Petits Nègres* d'Agatha Christie. Mais comme les ressorts de la nouvelle fantastique ou du roman policier ne sont pas ceux du roman, ..." "Intertexte et autotexte," *Poétique*, 27 (1976), 288.

[70] Michel Butor, "La Critique et l'invention," *Répertoire 111*, p. 18.

[71] Tynianov, "Destruction, parodie," *Change*, No. 2 (1969), p. 67. This critic's definition of parody reads as follows: "Une filiation littéraire, elle, est avant tout combat, *destruction* de l'ensemble ancien et nouvelle construction des ancients éléments. "

[72] Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 83-84.

[73] John Fowles, The Ebony Tower (New York: New American Library, 1974), p. 17.

[74] Jonathan Culler, Structuralist Poetics, p. 153.

[75] B. Eikhenbaum, "Sur la théorie de la prose," Théorie de la littérature, ed. Tzvetan Todorov, p. 208.

[76] The expression "proximité structurale" is from Tzvetan Todorov, Introduction à la littérature fantastique (Paris: Seuil, 1970), p. 55.

[77] Because of our choice of authors, our present topic does not require a discussion of the relationship which exists between the Gothic and the detective story. This should not suggest, however, that the Gothic tale is unlinked to detective fiction. (Poe was also a writer of Gothic tales). Two critics briefly mention the connection between the Gothic and the detective tale. Eric S. Rabkin in The Fantastic in Literature (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976) purports that "Gothicism is a literary movement that helped create the climate for the emergence in the nineteenth century of modern science fiction, the thriller, detective fiction, and the psychological novel." p. 182. See also Elizabeth MacAndrew, The Gothic Tradition in Fiction (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1979). For an excellent and synoptic essay on the Gothic genre, we invite the reader to consult: Milan V. Dimić, "Aspects of American and Canadian Gothicism," Proceedings of the 7th Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, eds. Milan V. Dimić and Juan Ferraté, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Erich Bieber, 1979), pp. 143-149. It would be fascinating to look at other traditions that have been very successfully merged with the detective genre. Apart from the fantastic element, the detective story has demonstrated that it can appropriate and support other styles or forms of literature as the fairy tale, the grotesque, surrealism and even science fiction. All of these traditions have been used to great advantage in the detective genre. Agatha Christie, for instance, in a novel like And Then There Were None utilized a fairy tale or nursery rhyme as the ground plan of her story. Dürrenmatt, another author to use the fairy tale, has also very effectively adopted the grotesque to function vividly within the detective genre. The grotesque is evident in many memorable scenes, one case in point being Barlach's and Tschanz's bizarre and formidable banquet at the end of Der Richter und sein Henker. Surrealism has endowed detective fiction with new ideas for its creation of awesome settings and atmospheres. The stories of Carr illustrate how the detective tale is indebted to surrealism. And a very good proof that the detective story structure and science fiction can co-inhabit is, of course, H.G. Wells' The Invisible Man and some of the very popular stories of Isaac Asimov.

[78] The vivid phrase "bulging brow" to refer to Poe is found in Michael Holquist, "Whodunit and Other Questions: Metaphysical Detective Stories in Post-War Fiction," New Literary History, 3, No. 1 (1971), 143. However, we later noticed that the expression in a varied form had been originally employed by Howard Haycraft: "all these sprang full-panoplied from the buzzing brain and lofty brow of the Philadelphia editor." See his abbreviated chapter on Poe from Murder for Pleasure, The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Howard Haycraft, p. 166.

[79] Rabkin, The Fantastic in Literature, p. 61. He summarizes well this naturalization of the fantastic in the following statement: "Though the thrill of the fantastic may function microcontextually, in the larger tale the ground rules are stable." p. 64. Rabkin's book and one section of Todorov's treatise on the fantastic, Introduction à la littérature fantastique, are the only two works, to our knowledge, which examine the role of the fantastic in the detective story.

[80] Roger Caillois, Au Coeur du fantastique (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), p. 30. The concept of "hésitation" is central to Todorov's definition of the fantastic: "Le fantastique, c'est l'hésitation éprouvée par un être qui ne connaît que les lois naturelles, face à un événement en apparence surnaturel." Introduction à la littérature fantastique, p. 29.

[81] Todorov's terms "vraisemblable et surnaturelle" originate from Soloviov's and Henry James' definition of the fantastic or uncanny, Introduction à la littérature fantastique, p. 54.

[82] Agatha Christie, Murder on the Orient Express (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1934), p. 119. Poirot adds to the exclamation about the impossible: "The impossible cannot have happened, therefore the impossible can be possible!"

[83] Doyle's story The Hound of the Baskervilles has been considered the model for detective stories that contain both the supernatural horror and the logical explanation, see Maria F. Rodell, Mystery Fiction: Theory and Technique (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943).

[84] Frank D. McSherry, "The Janus Resolution," The Mystery Writer's Art, ed. Francis M. Nevins, Jr. (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1970), p. 263.

[85] Irène Bessière bases her study Le Récit fantastique: La Poétique de l'incertain (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1974) on this idea of a multiplicity of possibilities that never elicit one final answer. While tracing a history of the tradition, she often refers to

Borges and his singular use of the fantastic but never views the fantastic in relation to the detective story.

[86] See Ralph Harper, *The World of the Thriller* (Cleveland, Ohio: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1969).

[87] John Dickson Carr's exact words are "the school of Sherlock Holmes and the school of Sam Spade." "The Grandest Game in the World," *The Mystery Writer's Art*, ed. Francis M. Nevins, Jr., p. 239.

[88] Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder," *The Simple Art of Murder*, p. 16. We know that the expression "down these mean streets a man must go" is also from Chandler's essay.

[89] Very little attention has been paid to the unique style which characterizes the work of Hammett and especially of Chandler. A study of their very original style would contribute to a greater appreciation of the literary qualities of the hard-boiled sub-genre.

[90] Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), p. 225. This expression of "not playing the sap" is, of course, a leitmotif in the novel.

[91] Jean de Milleret, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, p. 205.

[92] Todorov shows how the thriller and the horror story are correlated with the pattern of the detective story by looking at the *fabula* and *sjužet*. With respect to the thriller or "roman noir," Todorov explains: "Le roman noir est un roman policier qui fusionne les deux histoires ou, en d'autres mots, supprime la première et donne de la vie à la seconde. Ce n'est plus un crime antérieur au moment du récit qu'on nous relate, le récit coïncide avec l'action." "Typologie du roman policier," *Poétique de la prose*, p. 60.

[93] John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*, p. 142.

[94] Ishmael Reed's statement about his use of the classical detective story is quoted in Steven R. Carter's article: "Ishmael Reed's Neo-Hoodoo Detection," in *Dimensions of Detective Fiction*, eds. Larry N. Landrum, Pat Browne and Ray B. Browne (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1976), p. 267. The fact that Reed added Afro-American history and folklore to the detective pattern is made by the critic, p. 265.

Chapter Three

[*] A.C. Doyle, "The Final Problem," The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes, p. 240.

[1] For a very probing discussion about plot structure, see Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, ed. Alex Preminger, enl. ed. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974),pp. 622-625. One of the clearest definitions quoted about plot stresses its ability to "make" or give form to a story: "There is first a rambling and amorphous 'story', often taken over from tradition or picked up from some other extraneous source ... and then comes the serious business of making it into a play or an epic." p. 623.

[2] E. M. Forster in his searching treatment of plot in Aspects of the Novel is one of the rare critics to speak of the importance of the reader's intelligence and memory in retaining and re-constructing the plot pattern: "The plot-maker expects us to remember, we expect him to leave no loose ends." p. 95.

[3] The importance of plot in Borges' fictions is congruent with what we term his short short story form. Borges' concern for rigorous plots extends even to his poetic pieces. In his "Autobiographical Essay," for instance, Borges relates that: "In my later poetry, a narrative thread is always to be found. As a matter of fact, I even think of plots for poems." The Aleph and Other Stories, 1933-1969, ed. Norman Thomas di Giovanni, p. 251.

[4] In "La Littérature comme telle," Genette observes that the Russian formalists have gained much from Poe as the inventor of a popular genre and as theorist of plot: "La double prédilection pour ... la littérature populaire et la littérature d'avant-garde ... est un autre trait caractéristique du formalisme russe, où l'influence directe de Poe est d'ailleurs sensible," Figures, p. 262.

[5] V. Chklovski, "L'Histoire à mystères," Sur la théorie de la prose, trans. Guy Verret, pp. 147-168.

[6] After Aristotle, and much later Poe, in the twentieth century, formalists like Shklovsky and structuralists like Todorov, Brémond or Scholes have taken up with renewed vigor the analysis of plots. Scholes, for instance, surveys the plot structures of 'modern fabulators' as Borges, Hawkes, Fowles, Murdoch, Barth ..., authors whose major preoccupation is "delight in design" (p. 3), See Robert Scholes, Fabulation and Metafiction (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1979).

[7] Although there are many translations of Scheglov's essay, we have used the following text: Yu. K. Scheglov, "Towards a Description of Detective Story Structure," trans. L.M. O'Toole, Generating the Literary Text (Univ. of Essex, 1975, Russian Poetics in Translation, No. 1).

[8] L.M. O'Toole, "Analytic and Synthetic Approaches to Narrative Structure: Sherlock Holmes and 'The Sussex Vampire'," Style and Structure in Literature: Essays in the New Stylistics, ed. Roger Fowler (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 143-176.

[9] L.M. O'Toole, "Analytic and Synthetic Approaches to Narrative Structure: Sherlock Holmes and 'The Sussex Vampire'," Style and Structure in Literature: Essays in the New Stylistics, ed. Roger Fowler, p. 175.

[10] We find that a reader knowledgeable about the detective genre could easily interpolate the plot of a detective story on nearly every model and diagram found in Brémond and it would correspond exactly. However, Brémond himself has not mentioned detective stories, except for a slight reference to a Poe story in his extensive study: Logique du récit (Paris: Seuil, 1973), p. 232.

[11] We refer to the title of Brémond's article: "La Logique des possibles narratifs," Communications, 8 (1966), 60-76.

[12] E. Mélétinski, "L'Etude structurale et typologique du conte," appended to Vladimir Propp's Morphologie du conte, trans. M. Derrida, T. Todorov, C. Kahn (Paris: Seuil, 1965), p. 231.

[13] Brémond, "La Logique des possibles narratifs," Communications, 8 (1966), 69.

[14] There are few critics who discuss how the plot of detective fiction encompasses the schema of a conflict between opponents. Marie Rodell in Mystery Fiction: Theory and Technique is unusually clear in her commentaries about how "mystery fiction is based on a double pattern of major conflicts" and how these conflicts can overlap. p. 62.

[15] While it is true that this metamorphosis of the detective into the murderer at the level of the plot transforms the structure of the detective story, it is also true that traditional detective fiction, beginning as early as E.A. Poe's "Thou Art the Man," incorporated this Gothic element of the double or ultimately the search for the self into the detective genre. Modern critics see this metamorphosis of characters as a completely avant-garde phenomenon: they are uninformed about

popular fiction. The critic Ben F. Stoltzfus in Alain Robbe-Grillet and the New French Novel (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1964) uses the term "mock-detective motif," for instance, to define this metamorphosis. This type of reversal or metamorphosis is quite common in the detective genre.

[16] Two critics have drawn up a typology of plots for detective fiction. In a very unpretentious article, "De l'approche stylistique d'un mauvais genre littéraire: le roman policier," Linguistique et littérature (Paris: La Nouvelle Critique, 1968), pp. 164-170, J.-P. Colin distinguishes six possible arrangements for the detective structure. Using his terminology "rupture" and "rétablissement," he considers how the "rupture" or the crime can be posited in the narrative: 1) before the story begins, 2) at the outset of the story and with or without witnesses, 3) during the narrative, 4) at the end of the story, 5) how one "rupture" can link one author's story to another one of his texts, 6) how there may be no real "rupture" and therefore the story is a parody. Josée Dupuy, in her small book Le Roman policier, simplifies her system to three categories: she contends that the crime's position in a narrative can either be at the beginning, in the middle or at the end. In addition, whereas we find Brémond's bilateral view of action which oscillates between "l'amélioration" and "la dégradation" as most enlightening and applicable to a study of detective morphology, a critic like Josée Dupuy will prefer Brémond's very general vision of the tripartite "séquence élémentaire." Dupuy transfers very simplistically this "séquence élémentaire" which is used to divide the narrative according to a beginning, middle and end to describe the detective plot and its rigid structure of crime, investigation and solution.

[17] This expression is taken from the sub-title of Irène Bessière's book: Le Récit fantastique: la poétique de l'incertain.

[18] V. Nabokov, The Defense, pp. 213-214.

[19] Marjorie Nicolson, "The Professor and the Detective," The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Howard Haycraft, p. 119.

[20] A.C. Doyle, "The Musgrave Ritual," The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes, p. 106.

[21] Ellery Queen, The Chinese Orange Mystery (Bergenfield, N.J.: New American Library, 1970), p. 164.

[22] Edgar Allan Poe, "Dickens's Barnaby Rudge," The Works of Edgar Allan Poe, eds. E. C. Stedman and G. E. Woodberry, vol. Vll

(New York: The Colonial Company Limited, 1895), p. 51.

[23] Poe, "Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge*," *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, eds. E. C. Stedman and G. E. Woodberry, p. 49. Like Poe, Shklovsky also chose one of Dickens' novels to analyze the reading process particular to mystery fiction. He concludes that *Little Dorrit* "can be related in the above form [fabula form] only after we have finished reading it. While reading we have before us a collection of mysteries." See the excerpt of "The Mystery Novel: Dickens's *Little Dorrit*," in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, eds., L. Matejka and K. Pomorska, pp. 221 - 222.

[24] Michel Butor, "Recherches sur la technique du roman," *Essais sur le roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p. 118.

[25] A. Robbe-Grillet, "Temps et description dans le récit d'aujourd'hui, *Pour un nouveau roman*, p. 169.

[26] Adolfo Bioy Casares, "Jorge Luis Borges: *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*," *Sur*, 92 (1942), 60 - 61.

[27] A. Robbe-Grillet, "Notes: Casares, *L'Invention de Morel*," *Critique: Revue générale des publications françaises et étrangères*, 9, No. 69 (1953), 172. It is Robbe-Grillet who underlines part of the last sentence.

[28] Emir Rodriguez Monegal, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Literary Biography* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978), p. 407. This critic discusses at length but independently the detective story and the fantastic: he does not see how the two genres or traditions operate conjointly and how the detective structure furnishes the fantastic dimension with a matrix.

[29] A fine analysis of these four major types of the fantastic is made by Rodriguez Monegal in his books: *Borges par lui-même*, trans. Françoise-Marie Rosset (Paris: Seuil, 1970) and *Jorge Luis Borges: A Literary Biography*.

[30] For example, Donald Yates, a specialist of detective fiction, has edited an interesting collection of papers on the fantastic in Spanish-American literature. See *Otros mundos, otros fuegos: Fantasía y realismo mágico en Iberoamérica* (Pittsburgh, K. and S. Enterprises, 1975.) (Memoria del XVI Congreso Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana) Apart from this general collection on the fantastic, we may note a few seminal essays by writers themselves, for example, Casares, "On fantastic literature," *Prose for Borges*, ed. Charles Newman and Mary Kinzie (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 166-174 and Julio Cortázar, "The Present State of Fiction in Latin America," *Books Abroad*, 50 (1976), 522-532.

[31] Noé Jitrik, "Structure et signification de *Fictions* de J.-L. Borges," *Linguistique et littérature* (Paris: La Nouvelle *Critique*, 1968), p. 108. In examining the investigative pattern, Jitrik classifies Borges' fictions into three groups: "découverte, création, organisation." p. 109.

[32] Whenever allusion is made to Borges and detective fiction, the one story that comes to mind is always "La muerte y la brújula." For instance, a recent article considers primarily this story, see Tamara Holzapfel, "Crime and Detection in a Defective World: The Detective Fictions of Borges and Dürrenmatt," *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature*, 3, No. 1 (1978), 53 - 71.

[33] Borges speaks of his technique of "beaucoup de choses *worked in, inlaid*" while specifically discussing his stories "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" and "La muerte y la brújula": see the interview "Entretiens avec James E. Irby," *L'Herne* (1964), 394.

[34] We are using the term "embedded plot" or "enchâssement" as it is found in Ducrot and Todorov, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Sciences of Language*, pp. 297 - 299. According to Todorov, the embedding of an inner narrative or (1- 2 -1) makes explicit the relation of reflection or mirroring between the embedded inside story and the outside frame: "l'enchâssement est une mise en évidence de la propriété la plus essentielle de tout récit. Car le récit enchâssant, c'est le *récit d'un récit*. En racontant l'histoire d'un autre récit, le premier atteint son thème fondamental et en même temps se réfléchit dans cette image de soi-même... ." *Poétique de la prose*, p. 85. Borges' expression of the 'inlaid' material would correspond to Todorov's definition of 'enchâssement'. Although we use the term to describe the inner plot of "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," it is obvious that "La muerte y la brújula" and many of Borges' other stories have embedded plots.

[35] "Entretiens avec James E. Irby," *L'Herne* (1964), 394.

[36] Ralph Harper in *The World of the Thriller*, p. 21 utilizes the phrase "a man hunts and in turn is hunted" to describe one of the first English spy novels, John Buchan's *The Thirty-nine Steps*. A later brilliant illustration of a double pursuit is Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* where Smiley plans a trap, and Leamas, collaborating with him on another chase, is unsuspectingly pursued, caught and annihilated.

[37] Yu Tsun's stratagem of displaying a secret publicly is suggestive of Poe. This contiguity was noticed by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in "Doubles and Counterparts: Patterns of Interchangeability in

Borges' "The Garden of Forking Paths"," *Critical Inquiry*, 6, No. 4 (1980), 641-642. The idea of concealment through exposure is one of the topics analyzed by Jacques Lacan in his influential essay: "Le séminaire sur "La Lettre volée"," *Ecrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 11-61.

[38] Borges, "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," *Obras completas*, ed. Carlos V. Frías (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1974), p. 477. Except when otherwise noted, all quotations from Borges' stories, essays and poems will be taken from this edition and page numbers will be indicated in parenthesis within the text. It should be brought to attention that critics fail to discuss this fragment of the letter discovered by Albert as key to the decipherment of Ts'ui Pên's book.

[39] Borges' illustration of the merging of the 'real' and the 'unreal' in a narrative — Don Quixote reader of the *Quixote* or Hamlet spectator of the play Hamlet — in the essay "Magias parciales del Quijote," *Obras completas*, p. 669, also happens to be a very interesting definition of inner duplication. His examples of classic texts as forerunners of the modern idea of self-reflection have been ignored by critics of narcissistic fiction.

[40] It is a convention of the genre to include another detective, usually a member of the police force, to serve as foil to the hero-detective. This other detective, notorious for his obtuseness, never solves the mystery. Borges gives us an ironic twist to this device by allowing Inspector Treviranus to be correct about his assumption whereas Lönnrot, wishing to obviate the element of chance, is trapped in his own labyrinth.

[41] In the traditional detective story, the detective is not directly implicated in the violence and crimes. However, in thrillers and especially spy fictions, the detective-hero is vulnerable. This is one major distinction that can be drawn between the classic detective tale and the hybrid forms.

[42] In his remarks about this story, Borges affirms that the characters are to be seen as doubles: "The killer and the slain, whose minds work in the same way, may be the same man. Lönnrot is not an unbelievable fool walking into his own death trap but, in a symbolic way, a man committing suicide. This is hinted at by the similarity of their names. The end syllable of Lönnrot means red in German, and Red Scharlach is also translatable, in German, as Red Scarlet." "Commentaries," *The Aleph and Other Stories*, p. 269.

[43] The tetragram or lozenge design of the windows or even of the plot structure itself can be viewed as a labyrinth: "le thème des losanges (réduction géométrique du labyrinthe) est la métaphore de la

secrète symétrie de l'histoire policière." E. Rodriguez Monegal, *Borges par lui-même*, p. 83.

[44] Zeno's paradox of infinite progression (and by implication infinite regression) is analyzed by Borges in the essay "Avatares de la tortuga," *Obras completas*, pp. 254-258. Borges concludes that Zeno's paradox is best exemplified in Kafka's endless plots.

[45] In his position as a decipherer inside a prison, Tzinacán is similar to the detective in Borges' and Casares' *Seis problemas para Don Isidro Parodi*. Prisoners and men condemned to death are a familiar sight in Borges' stories: Yu Tsun writes his fragment in custody and under the sentence of death, Hladik asks to complete his drama before standing in front of the firing squad ("El milagro secreto"), or Asterión and Otto Dietrich utter a last monologue before their execution ("La casa de Asterión" and "*Deutsches Requiem*"), or Villari hides in his room ("La espera"), or Martin Fierro and Juan Dahlmann fight on the plain ("El fin" and "El Sur") . . . .

[46] Borges' personal experience of timelessness was the source of his rethinking of our ordinary apprehension of time and his formulation of infinite and circular time. While observing a familiar street thirty years later, the changelessness or the perfect identity between scenes induced Borges to feel as if time had stopped: "Me sentí muerto, me sentí percibidor abstracto del mundo; ... me sospeché poseedor del sentido reticente o ausente de la inconcebible palabra *eternidad*." For his account of this experience, see "Sentirse en muerte" (1928) included in "Nueva refutación del tiempo," *Obras completas*, pp. 764-766. (The quotation is on page 765.)

[47] We recall that Nabokov, in his two statements of appreciation of Borges' world (quoted in chapter one), had alluded to the Argentine author's poetic use of *chiaroscuro*. It would be interesting to analyze the symbolism of light and darkness in Borges' stories, especially scenes presenting the clarification of an enigma, scenes describing a visionary or hallucinatory experience, or scenes depicting the moment of the duel.

[48] At the level of the action, Borges' narratives end. This is why the story "La biblioteca de Babel" is always classified by Borges as his "Kafkian story." "An Autobiographical Essay," *The Aleph and Other Stories*, p. 243.

[49] Borges, as librarian or "inquisidore" in this story and in "reality," appropriately called his two collections of essays *Inquisiciones* and *Otras inquisiciones*.

[50] The term "inverted detective story" was created by Austin

Freeman in 1912 to characterize a few of his short stories that concerned themselves with the criminal. Boileau-Narcejac, in *Le Roman policier*, recognized the fundamental influence of this structure on the genre: "La méthode 'd'inversion,' contribua beaucoup au développement du genre, sous un angle entièrement nouveau; on peut même dire qu'elle a fait souche." p. 99. Melvyn Barnes in *Best Detective Fiction* states however that: "It was not until later that Freeman's idea was to bear fruit in the works of other writers who succeeded in establishing the 'inverted' detective story as something far more than an intriguing experiment." p. 83. The one writer who is renown for his stories about the criminal is, of course, Anthony Berkeley.

[51] Borges has had a lifelong predilection for marginal heroes, villains, desperadoes. His fascination with the Argentine gauchoes and outlaws has persisted undiminished from "Hombre de la esquina rosada" to his most recent writings; many of his poems and stories in *Elogio de la sombra* (1969) and *El informe de Brodie* (1970) expose aspects of the gaucho hero. These heroes of the pampas, according to Borges, are remarkable for their unfailing religion of courage and their love of solitude.

[52] An enterprising Edward G. Robinson is the paradigm of the gangster hero pursuing his enemy whereas a forlorn Burt Lancaster was usually cast in the role of the waiting victim. In fact, Lancaster portrayed Ole Andreson in one film version of Hemingway's "The Killers." For a discussion of archetypal gangster movies, one may consult: S. L. Karpf, *The Gangster Film: Emergence, Variation and Decay of a Genre — 1930-1940* (New York: Arno Press, 1973) and Alfred Appel, Jr. *Nabokov's Dark Cinema*.

[53] Borges has, on many occasions, affirmed his admiration for von Sternberg's silent gangster films. This short remark is taken from his "Commentaries," *The Aleph and Other Stories*, ed. Norman Thomas di Giovanni, p. 265. Borges was attracted to von Sternberg's films particularly for their art of reticence or omission. For Borges, this aesthetic of 'paring down' the plot to only the duel is responsible for the creation of an action that is highly dramatic and violent and encompasses a metaphysical and teleological dimension.

[54] "Entretiens avec James E. Irby," *L'Herne* (1964), 391. An allusion to von Sternberg's art is inserted in one of the tales in Borges' collection *Historia universal de la infamia* — "El asesino desinteresado Bill Harrigan": "La Historia (que, a semejanza de cierto director cinematográfico, procede por imágenes discontinuas) ..." *Obras completas*, p. 317. As an aside, it would be interesting to compare Borges' vision of Billy the Kid with that of Canadian poets bp Nichol and Michael Ondaatje.

[55] Donald A. Yates, "The Four Cardinal Points of Borges," *The Cardinal Points of Borges*, eds. Lowell Dunham and Ivar Ivask (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1971), p. 29.

[56] Martin Fierro is the popular gaucho hero of an Argentine folk poem written by José Hernandez. He is mentioned in many of Borges' other stories, for example in "Biografía de Tadeo Isidoro Cruz" and the story entitled precisely "Martin Fierro." In "An Autobiographical Essay," Borges' remarkable absence of priggishness vis-à-vis popular folk heroes is confessed: "My mother forbade the reading of Martin Fierro, since that was a book fit only for hoodlums and schoolboys and, besides, was not about real gauchos at all. This too I read on the sly." The Aleph and Other Stories, ed. di Giovanni, p. 210.

[57] Borges' number symbolism, like the main images and metaphors in his ficciones (labyrinths, mirrors), is used to denote infinite time. In this case, the Negro waited seven years, in other words, an indefinite and infinite time span. In "La casa de Asterión," the number of doors in Asterión's labyrinth is fourteen, again signifying the infinite (and Borges, in a footnote, openly equates this number to the infinite). Borges also delights in playing with numbers that repeat themselves as seen in one of his favorites—The 1001 nights; for instance, Villari's apartment number in "La espera" is 4004 implying the circularity of time.

[58] For this felicitous expression "lieu du destin," see the chapter on space in Roland Bourneuf and Réal Ouellet, L'Univers du roman.

[59] The chapter on Borges in my M.A. thesis "The Image of the Labyrinth in Representative Works of Joyce, Kafka, Borges and Robbe-Grillet" (Univ. of Alberta, 1974) analyses the labyrinth as space according to these two categories of the architectural and the geographical labyrinth or the palace and the desert.

[60] Rodriguez Monegal in Borges par lui-même informs us that: "Borges, dans une conférence sur Poe, analyse comment l'auteur créé une ambiance d'irréalité et d'horreur — il [Poe] décrit soigneusement l'architecture du labyrinthe du collège de William Wilson."

[61] In an instructive article, Ricardo Gullón explains how some authors including Borges imagine a space "in order to place within it a genuinely revealing metaphor." The labyrinth, according to this critic, would be a "metaphor-space." See "On Space in the Novel," Critical Inquiry, 2, No. 1 (1975), 18.

[62] One of Borges' early tales "Hombres pelearon" (Men Fought) was the first of many to feature the motiveless duel: "This story is one I have been retelling, with small variations, ever since. It is the tale of the motiveless, or disinterested, duel — of courage for its own sake." "An Autobiographical Essay," The Aleph and Other Stories, ed. di Giovanni, p. 232.

[63] "Emma Zunz" furnishes the reader with an outstanding example of a story with a perfect premeditated plan. Hours after receiving notice of her father's suicide, Emma has already conceived a plan of revenge. During the evening and the next day, she reviews and refines her plan. The next afternoon, Emma proceeds to the brothel and then to the factory where she shoots Loewenthal. Her actions prior to the crime, as she informs the police, are all verifiable and true except: "sólo eran falsas las circunstancias, la hora y uno o dos nombres propios." Obras completas, p. 568.

[64] Stuart Kaminsky, "Little Caesar and its role in the Gangster Film Genre," Journal of Popular Film, 1, No. 3 (1972), 214.

[65] Rodriguez Monegal is one of the few critics of Borges to have suggested a relation between the waiting episode in Hemingway's "The Killers" and "La espera" and to also mention that this experience of waiting was Borges' own during the Perón dictatorship, see Emir Rodriguez Monegal, Jorge Luis Borges: A Literary Biography, p. 437.

[66] "Episodio del enemigo" is, in a way, a counterpart to "La espera." The same plot pattern of waiting and dreaming about an impending duel is found in both stories. However in the more recent story, the dreamer, — Borges himself — when his long-awaited opponent arrives, triumphs by awaking.

[67] Hubert Aquin, Prochain épisode, pp. 126-127.

Chapter Four

[*] G.K. Chesterton, "The Flying Stars," *The Innocence of Father Brown*, p. 76.

[1] Nabokov, The *Gift*, trans. Michael Scammell in collaboration with the author, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1963), p. 21.

[2] In his article "Notes sur le fantastique (textes de Théophile Gautier)," Bellemin-Noël discusses this need of a witness as mediator in fantastic fiction: "l'écrivain *dédouble son narrateur*: ce n'est pas le héros lui-même qui raconte ce qui nous est présenté au mode personnel pour que nous l'éprouvions avec lui (par introjection); c'est une sorte d'*alter ego* qui fait office de témoin et qui assure la crédibilité en même temps que la 'dicibilité' du narré." see *Littérature*, No. 8 (1972), 5.

[3] Peter Brooks in a recent study of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, although he does not see Marlow as witness-narrator, finds that the narrative procedure used in the novel is one particular to the detective genre: "Tout comme le récit du détective, le récit de Marlow n'est pas premier: il s'attache à l'histoire d'un autre, reprend la trace d'un autre, répète un voyage déjà fait." "Un rapport illisible: *Coeur des ténèbres*," *Poétique*, 44 (1980), 472-489.

[4] Norman Friedman clearly underlines how mystery can be transmitted through the objective and neutral perspective of a Hammett: "if the author's purpose is to produce in the reader's mind a moment of revelation —...— then the Dramatic Mode, with its tendency to imply more than it states, provides the logical approach." See "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," *PMLA*, 170 (1955), 1182.

[5] Genette, *Figures III*, p. 253.

[6] Genette, *Figures III*, p. 207.

[7] Dorothy L. Sayers, "The Omnibus of Crime (1928-29)," *The Art of the Mystery Story*: *A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Howard Haycraft, p. 99. Credit should be given to Dorothy Sayers for being one of the first to explore the problem of confidentiality in detective fiction. Her analysis centers on how the narrative viewpoint in one novel, *Trent's Last Case*, shifts from exterior to interior perspective and how, at the end, the narrator's unreliability is cancelled. Sayers was also the first to forcefully argue that Poe's "Thou Art the Man" be incorporated in the canon of his other detective tales.

[8] See the section entitled "Viewpoint" in Robert Champigny's What Will Have Happened, pp. 64-88.

[9] Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov, Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du language (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 413.

[10] Champigny, What Will Have Happened, p. 66 where he speaks of these intrusions as "free" or "unattributed comments."

[11] For an explication of the notion of "a monological voice," we refer the reader to: Bakhtine, La Poétique de Dostoievski, pp. 324-347.

[12] Poe, in his critical essay "Dickens's Barnaby Rudge," accuses Dickens of a "misdemeanor against Art" when the author makes inappropriate comments at the expense of his characters, see The Works of Edgar Allan Poe, eds. E.C. Stedman and G. E. Woodberry, p. 51.

[13] Francis Iles (Anthony Berkeley), Malice Aforethought: The Story of a Commonplace Crime (London: Victor Gollancz, 1931), p. 1.

[14] Agatha Christie, The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, p. 95.

[15] In the preface to this story, Boileau-Narcejac demonstrate how they have reversed the usual pattern and narrative mode of detective fiction: "Les auteurs du livre ont imaginé un roman policier classique mais, au lieu de partir du crime, ils sont partis de la machination qui conduit au crime. Le récit est entièrement écrit du point de vue de la victime, ce qui est la condition même du suspense." Les Diaboliques (Paris: Denoël, 1952), p. 7.

[16] Roland Barthes, Le Degré zéro de l'écriture, Nouveaux essais critiques (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 28-29.

[17] Gérard Genette, Figures III, p. 254.

[18] Benveniste's phrase is found as epigraph to Jean Rousset's Narcisse romancier: Essai sur la première personne dans le roman (Paris: José Corti, 1972), p. 7.

[19] The narrative technique is noticeably similar in stories

like "Hombre de la esquina rosada," "La forma de la espada," and "La casa de Asterión." Borges has commented on this contiguity between his narrators (what we have called the concealed narrator) in two of his stories: "And I thought that the whole point lay in the fact of the story ["La casa de Asterión"] being told by, in a sense, the same scheme as "The Form of the Sword," but instead of a man you had a monster telling the story." Richard Burgin, Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges, p. 56. E. Rodriguez Monegal in Borges par lui-même notices how "La casa de Asterión" unfolds like a detective story. The critic also mentions that the narrative technique used in this ficcione has affinities with "Hombre de la esquina rosada" and "La forma de la espada," but he does not see, by extension, that these other narratives are also very much detective-like: "Comme dans "L'Homme au coin du mur rose" ou dans "La Forme de l'épée," le procédé consiste à présenter l'histoire du point de vue du protagoniste, ce qui donne à Borgès l'occasion de parler à la première personne et, par conséquent, de passer sous silence la partie de l'histoire qu'il ne veut pas raconter, ou qu'il ne veut révéler qu'à la fin. Dans le cas présent, il s'agit de cacher au lecteur, comme dans un roman policier, la véritable identité d'Asterión." p. 96.

[20] Gérard Genette, Figures III, p. 254.

[21] A concealed metamorphosed narrator who pretends to be the intrepid individual when he is the coward illustrates in itself the idea of the double. Thus, Vincent Moon's dissociated self is reminiscent of the fantastic stories of doubles as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

[22] The terms "masques et métamorphoses du narrateur" and "le narrateur et ses doubles" are two of the chapter headings of Bruce Morrissette's book Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet, pp. 239-262 and pp. 263-296. Robbe-Grillet's narrative mode of multiple perspectives as in Les Gommes has affiliations to detective fiction. The idea of multiple perspectives is often implicated in the fragmented information offered by characters in the detective story. Every time an interrogation or an interview is carried out, a network of conflicting perspectives arises, for instance, each select member of the detective club in Anthony Berkeley's The Poisoned Chocolates Case gives a lecture on his conception of the impenetrable crime. When we glance at modern authors who have been influenced by the detective genre, we recognize how experiments with multiple viewpoints can range from Faulkner's As I Lay Dying to the exclusive interrogation format of Pinget's L'Inquisitoire. Robbe-Grillet's Les Gommes figures prominently in this exploration of the repetition and ambiguity occasioned by several points of view.

[23] The following editions of Despair and Lolita are used in our analysis and page numbers will be indicated in the text: Despair (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1965) and Lolita (New York: Capricorn Books, 1955).

[24] Page Stegner's first statement is taken from his "Introduction," The Portable Nabokov, p. xvi while his second remark is found in his full-length study, Escape into Aesthetics, p. 47.

[25] Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (London: Jonathan Cape, 1921), p. 163.

[26] Dorothy L. Sayers, "The Omnibus of Crime (1928-29)," The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Howard Haycraft, p. 102.

[27] We adapt Nabokov's phrase about the designer and the design from his "Foreword" to The Gift where Nabokov uses the expression to admonish any critic who would assume there is a relation between the author and the main character Fyodor.

[28] Nabokov's exact phrase, as it occurs in Despair, is "doubly blest"; the idea of 'doubly creative' concurs with the term "doubly blest" to define the narrator as plotter of a crime and contriver of a narrative.

[29] Andrew Field, Nabokov: His Life in Art, p. 220, where Nabokov calls his narrator "one of my literary impersonators."

[30] Dostoevsky had considered using a confessional mode in his writing of Crime and Punishment where either the first person narrator would recollect his past crime or would publicly confess his crime at a trial. This type of confession could have been inspired by Dostoevsky's reading of his favorite Victor Hugo story Le Dernier jour d'un condamné which takes the form of a prisoner's confession. For more information, see Leonid P. Grossman, "The Construction of the Novel," Crime and Punishment, ed. George Gibian, trans. Jessie Coulson (New York: W.W. Norton, 1964), p. 651.

[31] The existential context of murder, guilt and imprisonment has been comprehensively researched by some critics. Victor Brombert's La Prison romantique: Essai sur l'imaginaire (Paris: José Corti, 1976), for instance, is encyclopedic in scope, yet he inadvertently fails to even recognize, in his last chapter on the moderns, the existence of an auto-centric contemporary tradition of crime, murder and imprisonment in a Borges, Nabokov or Robbe-Grillet.

[32] In his "Foreword" to Despair, Nabokov compares his two murderers and finds that there is some hope of salvation for Humbert but not for Hermann: "Both are neurotic scoundrels, yet there is a green lane in Paradise where Humbert is permitted to wander at dusk once a

year; but Hell shall never parole Hermann." p. 9.

[33] Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Speckled Band," The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (London: John Murray and Jonathan Cape, 1974), p. 187. The framing device of explaining that a story did not originate *ex nihilo* is found at the beginning of most detective narratives told by a first person narrator. An examination of the intertextual and framing techniques and the self-conscious narrator in detective fiction is long overdue.

[34] Agatha Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, p. 1.

[35] Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov, *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du language*, pp. 413-414.

[36] See Jean Ricardou's section entitled "Temps de la narration, temps de la fiction," in *Problèmes du nouveau roman* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), pp. 161-170 and Michel Butor's essay "Recherches sur la technique du roman," *Essais sur le roman*, p. 118 where Butor also adds a third time span — "dès que nous abordons la région du roman, il faut superposer au moins trois temps: celui de l'aventure, celui de l'écriture, celui de la lecture."

[37] Genette, *Figures III*, p. 228. We should observe that in a footnote, Genette realized that precisely Nabokov's novels could refute his assertion. A novel like Robbe-Grillet's *Dans le labyrinthe* proves very conclusively Nabokov's contention that space is as important, if not more important than time in being the other demarcation point in the movement from the "aventure" to the "écriture." In this novel, the fluctuation from the exterior action of the soldier in the snowy street to the interior action of the narrator-writer at his desk finds itself exposed not only by dechronology but more apparently by the narrator's persistent return to the room and the description of the dust, the lamp, the knife and the painting.

[38] This expression is of course the title of Carl Proffer's book *Keys to Lolita*.

[39] A. Appel, "Introduction," *Vladimir Nabokov: The Annotated Lolita*, p. xl. It comes as no surprise that the last scene of Quilty's death was thus written much earlier than other sequences because, as Nabokov reveals: "his death [Quilty] had to be clear in my mind in order to control his earlier appearances." p. xxxix.

[40] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 309-310. We underline the last sentence.

Chapter Five

[*] Raymond Chandler, "Casual Notes on the Mystery Novel," *Raymond Chandler Speaking*, eds. Dorothy Gardiner and Katherine S. Walker (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1962), p. 68.

[1] Chesterton, "On Detective Novels," *Generally Speaking: A Book of Essays*, p. 2.

[2] Todorov, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*, p. 95.

[3] François Truffaut with the collaboration of Helen G. Scott, *Hitchcock* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), p. 95.

[4] Butor, "Recherches sur la technique du roman," *Essais sur le roman*, p. 119. Butor, in noting how what is unsaid in a story can take more significance then what is actually written, gives us an illustration: "... ce n'est que si nous avons pris soin de dire où était Pierre lundi, mardi, jeudi, vendredi, et samedi, qu'apparaît soudain mercredi comme un vide (on trouve déjà cela dans le roman policier)."

[5] Rutherford, "Story, Character, Setting, and Narrative Mode in Galdos's *El amigo Manso*," *Style and Structure in Literature: Essays in the New Stylistics*, ed. Roger Fowler, pp. 210-211.

[6] Meir Sternberg, in an excellent book-length analysis concerning expositions or openings in fiction, often illustrates his arguments with demonstrations from detective fiction. Unlike a Barthes or a Genette, Sternberg is very clear in his distinction between the main omission or "expositionary gap" and the secondary omission or the "temporary gap". See his chapter precisely on the detective genre: "Retardatory Structure, Expositional Suspension, and the Detective Story," in *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction*, pp. 159-182.

[7] Agatha Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, p. 254.

[8] The formalist Boris Tomashevsky specifically mentions detective fiction in his definition of the "misleading motivation" whose purpose in the narrative is to "baffle and perplex the reader": "... props and episodes may be used to distract the reader's attention from the real situation. This happens frequently in detective novels, where a series

of details is given in order to lead the reader (and a group of characters — for example, Watson or the police in Conan Doyle) up a blind alley. The author forces the reader to expect an ending inconsistent with the facts of the case." "Thematics," *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, eds. and trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, p. 80. The structuralist Eugene Dorfman uses the idea of omission as the criterion for distinguishing between the "core element" and the "marginal elements" in a narrative: "In each case, there is a simple but decisive question: can the incident under consideration be omitted from the inventory without interrupting the continuity of the story?" see his book *The Narreme in the Medieval Romance Epic: An Introduction to Narrative Structures* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 6.

[9] Genette, *Figures III*, p. 212.

[10] The first chapter of Boileau-Narcejac's book *Le Roman policier* is exactly entitled "Une littérature de l'ambiguité."

[11] Borges, "La humillación de los Northmore," *Prólogos*, p. 101. We underline Borges' sentence about the omissions which permit plurisignification in the texts.

[12] Henry James, "The New Novel," *Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. Morris Shapira (London: Heinemann, 1963), p. 332.

[13] Shlomith Rimmon's linguistic and structuralist readings of Henry James' short stories and pertinent references to detective fiction invite the critic to undertake a more comprehensive comparison between these two types of ambiguous narratives, see *The Concept of Ambiguity — the Example of James*.

[14] Geoffrey Hartman, "Literature High and Low: The Case of the Mystery Story," *The Fate of Reading and Other Essays* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 211.

[15] Some critics have contemplated Proust's entire masterpiece as a search or investigation of a major omission — time. See for example the early controversial but invigorating essay by Robert Vigneron, "Structure de Swann: *Combray* ou le cercle parfait," *Modern Philology*, 45 (1948), 185-207.

[16] Meir Sternberg, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction*, p. 51.

[17] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, pp. 81-82.

[18] Roland Barthes, "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits," *Communications*, 8 (1966), 10. In a footnote about omissions, Barthes writes: "Le roman policier fait grand usage de ces unités 'déroutantes'."

[19] Agatha Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, p. 48 and p. 254. I. I. Revzin in "Notes on the Semiotic Analysis of Detective Novels: With Examples from the Novels of Agatha Christie," *New Literary History*, 9, No. 2 (1978), gives this illustration as one of the best polysemic clues in the author's corpus, p. 387.

[20] Shlomith Rimmon-Kennan in "Doubles and Counterparts: Patterns of Interchangeability in Borges' "The Garden of Forking Paths"," *Critical Inquiry*, 6, No. 4 (1980), views this device as a *leurre*, p. 642. For a criticism of Barthes' failure to make clear the difference between *leurre*, *équivoque*, *blocage* ... see Shlomith Rimmon, "Barthes' "Hermeneutic code" and Henry James's Literary Detective: Plot-Composition in "The Figure in the Carpet"," *Hebrew Univ. Studies in Literature*, 1 (1973), 183-207.

[21] We learn from Barthes' article "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits," *Communications*, 8 (1966), that the expression "espace dilatoire," used in *S/Z*, issued originally from Paul Valéry, p. 10. It should be noted that, although we are not by any stretch of the imagination, very cognizant in the field of the reading process, we do know that some renowned specialists, initially Roman Ingarden in the 1930's and more recently Wolfgang Iser, have established theories based on their definition of reading as a gap-filling experience.

[22] Quotations from Robbe-Grillet's novels will be taken from the following editions and page numbers will be indicated in the text: *Les Gommes* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1953); *Le Voyeur* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1955); and *La Jalousie* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1957).

[23] Following the order of presentation, the quotations are from: Robbe-Grillet's interview with André Gardies as reproduced in "Textes et documents: le cinéma selon Robbe-Grillet," *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 118; J. Rivette and A.-S. Labarthe, "Entretien avec Resnais et Robbe-Grillet," *Cahiers du cinéma*, 21, No. 123 (1961), 18; Vicki Mistacco, "Interview with Robbe-Grillet," *Diacritics*, 6, No. 4 (1976), 37; *Colloque de Cerisy*, vol. II (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1976), p. 194.

[24] Maurice Blanchot, "La Clarté romanesque," *Le Livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), pp. 195-201 and Olga Bernal, *Alain Robbe-Grillet: le roman de l'absence* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964). In the middle section of her book, Bernal discusses absences on two levels of thought: first, "le vide" as 'image' or 'espace' and

secondly, "le vide" as technique which gives rise to a world of suppositions and uncertainty.

[25] Bernal alludes to Hemingway's objective and paratactic style in a footnote: "Hemingway se borne à montrer; il ne dit rien. C'est en cela qu'on peut comparer les deux méthodes: la sienne et celle de Robbe-Grillet." Alain Robbe-Grillet: le roman de l'absence, p. 117. This art of ellipsis or omission leaves much to inference and imagination; it was defined by Hemingway as his "new theory": "... my new theory that you could omit anything if you knew that you omitted and the omitted part would strengthen the story and make people feel something more than they understood." "The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water." See Hemingway, A Moveable Feast (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 75 and Death in the Afternoon (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 192. Claude-Edmonde Magny's critical text, L'Age du roman américain (Paris: Seuil 1948), reputed for its aplomb and reasoned assessment of American letters, studies the elliptical style of Hemingway and Faulkner and of detective writers like Hammett and Chandler.

[26] Bernal, Alain Robbe-Grillet: le roman de l'absence, p. 107. Bernal's single comment about the detective story and Faulkner's novels is questionable. In a novel like Absalom, Absalom! for instance, is Charles Bon's murder ever conclusively settled? While several second-hand witnesses to the family conflict present their interpretation and inferences, the central voice of Quentin, at the end, imagines what might have precipitated the murder –– however, although there is a quasi-satisfactory pattern given to us, we are still in the realm of the hypothetical or of the imaginary.

[27] Butor, L'Emploi du temps, p. 383 and p. 427.

[28] Kathleen O'Neill, "On Passing Time," Mosaic, 8, No. 1 (1978), 35-36. For a recent article on gaps in Butor's novel, see Lorna Martens, "Empty Center and Open End: The Theme of Language in Michel Butor's L'Emploi du temps," PMLA, 96, No. 1 (1981), 49-63. Jean Ricardou dubs L'Emploi du temps "le récit de l'hiatus" in Problèmes du nouveau roman, p. 185. Other nouveau roman writers, like Robbe-Grillet and Butor, take the perplexities of reality as guide in their elaboration of narratives with holes, slips, interlacements and compendia of inferences. The preface to Claude Simon's novel Le Vent, to illustrate, explains how omissions in the text correspond to (or even derive from) the processes of cognition and memory: "que cette connaissance fragmentaire, incomplète, faite d'une addition de brèves images, elles-mêmes incomplètement appréhendées par la vision, de paroles, elles-mêmes mal saisies, de sensations, elles-mêmes mal définies, et tout cela vague, plein de trous, de vides, ... Le Vent (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1957), p. 9.

[29] Robbe-Grillet's "prière d'insérer" to Les Gommes is quoted from Morrissette, Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet, p. 41.

[30] Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 49-50. One article considers the kinship between detective fiction and Faulkner's art of reticence. In Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!, since speculation and repetition replace straightforward narration, the reader must actively participate in the reconstruction of the text. In such a novel, the reader is the veritable detective: "Each reader, in accepting or rejecting the various hypotheses raised for his deliberation, becomes actively involved in the composition of his own Absalom, Absalom!; he becomes, so to speak, his own detective, jury, and, perhaps, judge!" see Mick Gidley, "Elements of the Detective Story in William Faulkner's Fiction," Dimensions of Detective Fiction, eds. Larry N. Landrum, Pat Browne and Ray B. Browne, p. 240.

[31] Robbe-Grillet, "Introduction," L'Année dernière à Marienbad, pp. 15-16. The term "hypothèse objectivée" is also from this prolusion, see p. 17.

[32] The first quotation is from Robbe-Grillet's essay "Temps et description dans le récit d'aujourd'hui," while the second is from "Du réalisme à la réalité," Pour un nouveau roman, p, 163 and p. 177.

[33] We know, of course, that the original title of Robbe-Grillet's novel was Le Voyageur not Le Voyeur. The author may have erased the title but a reader can still find vestiges of Mathias as "le voyageur" — in fact, there are probably more references to "le voyageur" than to "le voyeur" in the narrative.

[34] In our opinion, there is a startling similarity between incessantly tabulating an "emploi du temps" at the heart of Le Voyeur and the title and enterprise of Butor's novel. We should notice that Revel, like Mathias, keeps a daily record of his activities. And in the same way that Mathias cannot "parachever le récit de sa fausse journée" (p. 280), Revel leaves Bleston with his journal incomplete (and incompletable).

[35] While still on the island, Mathias fears that Julien will publicly accuse him and that he will be captured: "De toute manière il était trop tard. Le jeune Julien Marek l'avait probablement dénoncé dans la soirée. ... Il se demanda si l'on disposait de menottes, dans l'île, et quelle serait la longueur de la chaînette reliant les deux anneaux." p. 279. However, much to the readers' (and even Mathias') astonishment, the criminal easily escapes.

[36] Genette developed the term analepse to define any action presented retrospectively: "toute évocation après coup d'un événement antérieur au point de l'histoire où l'on se trouve" Figures III, p. 82. This term is in opposition to prolepse or anticipations in a text. With respect to Le Voyeur, we see how Genette's finer distinction of analepse complétive or renvoi explains well Mathias' specious filling in of a major omission: "comprend les segments rétrospectifs qui viennent combler après coup une lacune antérieure du récit, lequel s'organise ainsi par omissions provisoires et réparations plus ou moins tardives, selon une logique narrative partiellement indépendante de l'écoulement du temps." p. 92. Obviously, detective fiction, because of its technique of omission, makes steadfast use of renvois in its radical deformation of time or dechronology.

[37] Since A and Franck do not wish to talk about their journey, Franck must fill in the silences in the conversation by giving a long exposition on how one proceeds to dismantle and repair a motor. This type of embarrassing digression reminds one of Mathias' padding out the blanks in his speech with Julien by reciting the multiplication table. (Needless to say, A is greatly amused by Franck's efforts): "Franck récapitule à présent la liste des pièces à démonter pour l'examen complet d'un carburateur. Il s'acquitte de cet inventaire exhaustif avec un souci d'exactitude qui l'oblige à mentionner une foule d'éléments allant pourtant de soi; il va presque jusqu'à décrire le dévissage d'un écrou, tour après tour, et de même ensuite pour l'opération inverse. "Vous avez l'air très fort en mécanique, aujourd'hui," dit A...". La Jalousie, p. 198. For Mathias, this exercise is an attempt to fill in the void of the crime, for Franck, to complete the gap of the visit.

[38] In his article "Temps et description dans le récit d'aujourd'hui," Robbe-Grillet is very emphatic about the primary use of both the sense of sight and of sound. Comparing the novelist's art to cinematic art (as he is fond of doing), Robbe-Grillet explains the movement from the objective to the subjective: "non pas tant l'image que la bande sonore ... et surtout la possibilité d'agir sur deux sens à la fois, l'oeil et l'oreille; enfin, dans l'image comme dans le son, la possibilité de présenter avec toute l'apparence de l'objectivité la moins contestable ce qui n'est, aussi bien, que rêve ou souvenir, en un mot ce qui n'est qu'imagination." Pour un nouveau roman, p. 161. And in the author's description of the narrator-spectator in L'Immortelle (who holds a similar posture as in La Jalousie), equal weight is relegated to the sense of sound and the imagination as to the sense of sight: "un narrateur qui ne 'raconte' rien, mais par les yeux de qui tout est vu, par les oreilles de qui tout est entendu, ou par l'esprit de qui tout est imaginé." "Notes préliminaires," L'Immortelle (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1963), p. 9.

[39] The expression "film intérieur" is from Robbe-Grillet, "Introduction," L'Année dernière à Marienbad, p. 16.

[40] Robbe-Grillet, "Nouveau roman homme nouveau," *Pour un nouveau roman*, p. 149.

[41] A more substantial excerpt from Jonathan Culler's argument reads as follows: "... we can explain almost any aspect of a text by postulating a narrator whose character the elements in question are designed to reflect or reveal. Thus, Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* may be recuperated, as Bruce Morrissette has done, by postulating an obsessed narrator with paranoiac suspicions so as to explain certain fixations of description; ...." *Structuralist Poetics*, p. 200.

[42] *La Jalousie* is a prime example of Genette's other type of *analepse*, the *analepse répétitive* or *rappel*. *Figures III*, p. 95.

[43] To distinguish between self-reflexive art and mimetic art, critics use the terms "production" and "reproduction"; for instance, it is the title of one of Dällenbach's sections in his book *Le Récit spéculaire* and it is the title of Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's article on Faulkner: "From Reproduction to Production: The Status of Narration in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*" *Degrés*, No. 16 (1978), fI-fI9.

[44] The phrase "soigneusement effacé" is from Jean Rousset, *Narcisse romancier*, p. 142.

[45] The fractionation of sound and especially sight is persistently stressed in Borges' short story — for example, in the scene of the stranger's arrival and in the scene of the dagger fight: "Recabarren vio el chambergo, el largo poncho oscuro, el caballo moro, pero no la cara del hombre, que, por fin, sujetó el galope y vino acercándose al trotecito. A unas doscientas varas dobló. Recabarren no lo vio más, pero lo oyó chistar, apearse, atar el caballo al palenque y entrar con paso firme en la pulpería." and "Desde su catre, Recabarren vio el fin. Una embestida y el negro reculó, ... Después vino otra que el pulpero no alcanzó a precisar y Fierro no se levantó." *Obras completas*, pp. 519-520 and p. 521.

[46] Jean Rousset's idea of *encadrement* relates to the position of the narrator in front of a door or a window. Our term *découpage* refines this idea of the narrator's position by placing him looking through the blinds in the window. For him, *la vue est 'encadrée'*, for us, *la vue est 'découpée'*. See his article "La Restriction de champ: Les deux jalousies," in *Narcisse romancier*, pp. 139-157. Rousset's notion of *encadrement* was first developed in his essay on Flaubert: "Madame Bovary ou le livre sur rien," *Forme et signification* (Paris: José Corti, 1962), pp. 109-133.

[47] The narrator, intent on observing or better still spying through the blinds, at one point, stops to examine the "jalousies" themselves and how they operate when closed and when opened: "Quand le système est clos, elles sont appliquées l'une contre l'autre par leurs bords, se recouvrant mutuellement d'environ un centimètre. En poussant la baguette vers le bas, on diminue l'inclinaison des lames, créant ainsi une série de jours dont la largeur s'accroît progressivement. Lorsque les jalousies sont ouvertes au maximum, les lames sont presque horizontales et montrent leur tranchant. Le versant opposé du vallon apparaît alors en bandes successives, superposées, séparées par des blancs un peu plus étroits." *La Jalousie*, p. 180.

[48] Critics have often enumerated various objects that contain a 'faille' or break. Jean Alter in *La Vision du monde d'Alain Robbe-Grillet: Structures et significations* (Genève: Droz, 1966) comments on a few of these: "coin de pelure décollé du quartier de tomate, fêlure dans le marbre de la commode, pont-bascule qui coupe l'itinéraire et laisse un interstice en s'abaissant, lettres qui manquent dans les noms des rues sur une gomme, quelque chose d'inachevé dans le dessin d'une mouette ..." pp. 93-94. However, to our knowledge, the blinds and their *découpage* have never been seen as a *mise en abyme* of the author's technique of gaps or omissions.

[49] *Nouveau roman* writers would agree that Robbe-Grillet handles with a masterly touch the art of *découpage*. In the film medium, Robbe-Grillet is also applauded for his daring innovations with cuts and omissions. However, for many, like the French Canadian Jean-Marie Poupart, the title "maître du découpage" goes to Alfred Hitchcock. See this critic's disrespectful but nonetheless arresting book on detective fiction: *Les Récréants: Essai portant, entre autres choses, sur le roman policier* (Montréal: Editions du jour, 1972), p. 19.

[50] The phrase "retour en avant" was first coined by Bernard Pingaud to designate Robbe-Grillet's anticipations or what Genette would come to call his *prospections* to off-set his *rétrospections*.

[51] Genette, *Figures III*, p. 218.

[52] The terms "microtexte" and "macrotexte" are Jean Ricardou's.

[53] In her study of Robbe-Grillet's *Dans le labyrinthe*, Betty Rahv discovered that the author made incisive use of parenthetical comments, questions and negations. Also, she believes that, confronted with an ambiguous narrative, a reader will either throw away the book in frustration or become more intellectually inspired. See *From Sartre to the New Novel*, pp. 101-148.

[54] To impress on the reader that the whole enigma of La Jalousie surrounds primarily the wife's behavior, the author will always follow her initial with the elliptical point (A...). The hiatus after her name suggests the unknown and functions as a gap in the narrative. One should observe that Robbe-Grillet, although often using only an initial for a character's name, very seldom succeeds this initial with an elliptical mark in his novels or film scripts, for example, this type of ellipsis does not appear in either L'Immortelle or La Maison de rendez-vous.

[55] Roland Barthes, "Préface," Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet by Bruce Morrissette, p. 14.

[56] Roland Barthes, "Préface," Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet by Bruce Morrissette, pp. 15-16.

[57] This expression is also the title of Oswald Ducrot's book Dire et ne pas dire.

Conclusion

*J. L. Borges, "Preface to the 1964, 1966, and 1967 editions of Obra poética," as cited in Jorge Luis Borges: Selected Poems 1923-1967, ed. Norman Thomas di Giovanni (New York: Dell Publishing, 1972), p. 272.

[1] The expression "poetry of modern life" originated with Chesterton, "A Defense of Detective Stories," from The Defendant (1901) as quoted in Haycraft, ed., The Art of the Mystery Story, p. 4. For an assessment of Dickens' indebtedness to the popular genre, see a critical text like Ian Ousby, Bloodhound of Heaven: The Detective in English Fiction from Godwin to Doyle (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976).

[2] The detective-biographer must ultimately resign himself to an aborted "quest" or "pilgrimage" and a tarnished portrait: "Could I leave it thus and write the book all the same? A book with a blind spot. An unfinished picture ..." The Real Life of Sebastian Knight, p. 125. Also, Sebastian, being an adept writer of detective stories, excelled in his propitious assemblage of reticences: "the manner of his prose was the manner of his thinking and that was a dazzling succession of gaps ..." p. 35.

[3] Régis Messac, Le "Detective Novel" et l'influence de la pensée scientifique (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1929), p. 659.

[4] Robert Scholes, Fabulation and Metafiction, p. 218. Scholes' specific phrase about fabulation reads as follows: "renewed its vigor [fabulation] by touching the earth of popular narrative."

[5] Eric S. Rabkin's review of Robert Champigny's What Will Have Happened commends this critic's dauntlessness for his discussion of the detective genre: "Champigny is sufficiently brave to treat 'low' art with 'high' seriousness." Comparative Literature, 32, No. 2 (1980), 207.

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